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NOTES OF

SPIRITUAL RETREATS

AND INSTRUCTIONS

GIVEN BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN MORRIS

Priest of the Society of Jesus

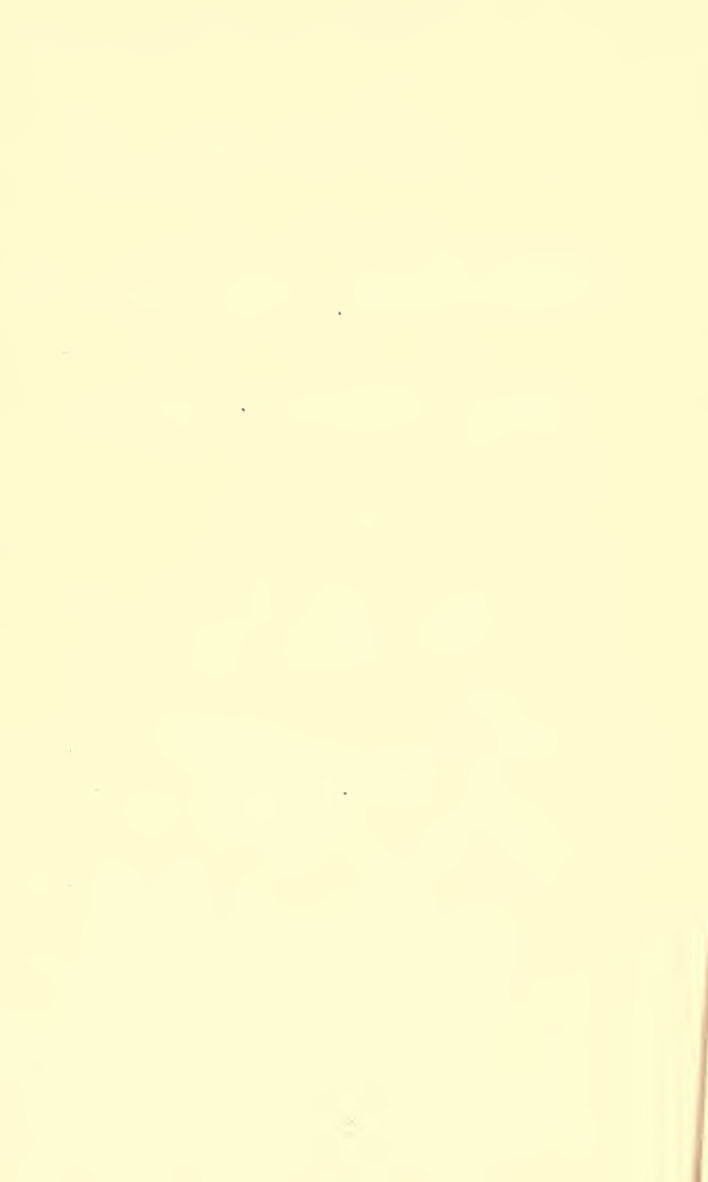
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THE two Retreats the Notes of which are printed in the present volume, were given at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Roehampton, by the late Father Morris, in 1893 and 1879.

The Retreat of 1893 has a special interest, as being the last that Father Morris gave to ladies in the world, and as having been given so shortly before his sudden death. Many doubtless of those who were present will have kept their own record of it, and for them these Notes may contain nothing new ; with the writer they will regret the inadequacy of words (although written down as they were spoken) to convey to those who have not come under his personal influence an idea of the force and earnestness and persuasiveness of the speaker.

It was not Father Morris's plan for the most part, and especially in treating of the life of our Lord, to arrange his meditations in points. His custom was rather to describe each scene as vividly and minutely as though he had been an actor in it. Almost did it seem that not by faith only, but with his bodily senses he had looked into the Face of the Divine Teacher, and heard the words that fell from His blessed Lips. The impression so made cannot be reproduced.

With the exception of one entitled "Confidence in God, the Lesson to be learnt from our Failures," and another on "Seeking first the Kingdom of God," the Instructions at the end of the volume were delivered to a small country congregation during the last Lent and Easter-tide that Father Morris spent on earth; and are valued by his friends as containing a few of his thoughts on those Sunday

Gospels which he almost invariably chose as the subjects for his morning Sermons.

In preparing these notes for the press, the writer has made as few alterations as possible, and has preserved throughout their colloquial form. This must be the apology for occasional abruptness, and for a want of finish which is never to be found in Father Morris's style in writing.

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SPIRITUAL RETREATS.

I.—JULY TWENTY-SECOND, 1893.

[8.30 P.M. *After Benediction.*]

PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

How well we have been received by our blessed Lord, He Himself giving the blessing on our retreat ! Let us put our hearts into His Sacred Heart and remember we have been welcomed by Him. To those who have never made a retreat before I say, Keep yourself quiet. Resign yourself into His Divine Hands. Have no anxiety about consequences. God will see to it all. Rest in a perfect sense of confidence that you have come to receive the benefits He will bestow on you. But be generous. Keep nothing back. Let Him have all He asks. The only use of coming into retreat is that we may serve Him better and go forth with our hearts strengthened.

And to those who have made former retreats I would say, Don't begin with any sense of discouragement. The devil tries always to discourage you as much as he can : he wants to take the strength out of

you. Make acts of contrition for want of correspondence with grace ; but don't think there will be no good in your retreat. Trust God, and go into it heartily. Of all alike I ask, *Make it start well*. The day before beginning is always very distracting. What can't be helped must be endured, but an extra effort is wanted to put away our cares and distractions. We can't afford to lose any of our retreat. It is a slice cut out of our lives for God. How seldom in the world we can give eight days exclusively to the thought of God ! Don't be frightened and think it will be too long : it will get shorter and shorter as it goes on. Bear any trial well, offer it as a sacrifice. You must not expect to get through without exertion. It is well worth while to bear any weariness. It is *God's time* : let Him have it.

The fruit depends largely on the way in which you keep silence, and silence not of the lips merely but of the heart. Put away your cares and occupations. Give yourself a fair chance. To indulge in all sorts of thoughts is wrong. You must exercise control over your mind and imagination.

In the Sunday's gospel to-morrow we hear our Lord saying, "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace." * Take those words for the subject of your meditation. I have come for the things that make for my peace. My soul shall be peaceful when united with the God of peace ; peace shall be found there, come what may. Peace is always found when the heart has given up

* Luke xix, 42.

resisting God. I will resist God no longer. I offer myself to Him that He may do with me what He pleases. "If thou hadst *known* the day of thy visitation." This is the day He destines for me. He will remove from my soul the things that hinder me from approaching Him. Let not our Lord say in that sad way, "Oh, *if* thou hadst known!" This is His day. Trust yourself to Him. Pray that you may know and carry out His will.

For He made me. I belong to Him. He has the right to me. Let Him say what He wills. Let Him ask of me what He pleases. It is ungenerous to make conditions. He has a right to all, because I am the work of His Hands. He made me with a purpose that I should do His will. *He* has never changed. It is I who have changed. It is I who have been unmindful of the purpose for which He made me. But though I should come with many, many years of my life wasted, with innumerable graces thrown away, He wills it still—that end, my own good. He stood in no need of me. All He asks is for my own benefit. Who so happy as the soul that gives itself to the Divine Will? Who so happy here? Who so happy in the world to come?

Was I ever the better for my wilfulness? How often I have swept away the Divine Will! Have I not always been the worse for so doing? Has indifference to His Will, has drifting idly, carelessly, done me good? There shall be an end to this careless indifference, so that I may come to God. This is *my* day, a day given in order that I may do what *He* wants me to do who made me out of love,

for my happiness. So I begin it in this way, making acts of sorrow, telling Him how sorry I am, flying to His Sacred Heart to place mine there, making acts of humility. I can't trust myself, I am utterly helpless ; so I come to Him with fullest confidence in His love and compassion.

You find yourself here, with your time to give, your heart to bring. Oh ! do desire to serve Him better. Thank Him for the opportunity you have of getting yourself ready for the divine companionship, when this life shall be over and the end have come !

FIRST DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE END FOR WHICH I WAS CREATED.

FOR a composition of place let us imagine we are waking up from sleep and coming into the world of realities, that we are leaving ourselves, our fancies and vagaries and coming to the reality, *Why did God make me?—What am I to do?* It is wonderful how the most vivid dreams fade ; when we wake up, we have our life to reconstruct. So now let us wake up from the dream of this world and let the reality come before us : God—God's holy Will. Now we are preparing ourselves to be with Him. O my God, may it be so. May Thy Will take possession of me, may I live a life of reality.

Why has God made me ? To praise Him, to love

Him, to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him for ever in the next. I find no mention of praising self, serving self, going my own way, pleasing myself. What is it then that will lead to Heaven? Having God before my eyes; praising Him, revering Him, serving Him. To praise Him! How grand to start with the thought of His goodness! We do not begin with what is austere and awful, with what would strike terror into our hearts, but with what is tender and loving. God reveals Himself to us as our Father. He is our Father *always*. The less we have shown ourselves worthy, the more we are bound to praise. It is not the fear of hell that is to prompt me, but the certainty that *God loves me*.

The Catechism tells us we are to *know* Him; then we *must* love Him. If we won't know Him, how can we admire Him? and if He is infinitely good, what an amount of knowledge we have to get, matter enough to spend not only life but eternity,—learning little by little, and as we learn coming to love, and then praise coming naturally. Is it not shocking to find how we have put *other* standards before us, carping, fault-finding with God and what comes from His Hands? His Providence is Himself, as praiseworthy as Himself.

So we begin by praise. Happy we! Praise puts all things on a proper footing. I will praise Him in my heart of hearts. I won't keep even a quarter for my discontent—praise shall pervade me entirely. How it tinges everything! What a difference between frightened unwilling reverence and the loving reverence of a heart that rejoices to see how great He is—a heart

that is proud of its God. The God on whom all depends—Him it is we love. Then we devote ourselves to His service, *i.e.*, doing His Will, spending ourselves in doing what He asks of us. *He* who is absolutely supreme, condescends to have a choice for us ; He the Almighty God, who makes Himself known by His goodness, vouchsafes to accept service from us ! How we feel drawn to Him when we praise Him ! What is my will for except to conform myself heartily to Him ? Can we conceive ourselves steadily, perseveringly praising Him, loving Him, reverencing Him, and think anything can make us happier than this ? Would it not be more sensible to give up our own will ? Our own will brings heart-aches, while the loving service of God brings peace.

In heaven we can look forward to our praise and service of God being what it should be. God can't be otherwise than good and loving. He made us to be happy. True enough we are in a state of probation. It is up-hill work because of Adam's sin ; but more, much more, because of what we have done ourselves. St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus had Adam for their ancestor as much as we have. We have created difficulties for ourselves. We might have happiness here, if we gave Him praise as we trust we shall by and by. That is what is wanting. If we have got God's Will on our side, it is our own fault if we are not happy. Am I humble ? am I obedient ? am I doing His Will ? God made me for happiness. Is it not *grand* to look forward to an eternity that shall never end—a love that shall take full and perfect possession of me, that will take the

whole of me and draw me to God? He made me for that, to spend eternity in praising and loving Him.

The object is then to wake to the reality that God loves me and wants me to love Him. My own foolishness has kept me away from the consciousness of His love. My whole life was intended to be a manifestation of my love for Him. It *is* His Will that I should devote my life to Him.

Look what we have got to say. What a sense of shame should be ours. To have been dreaming away our life, to have been wasting such precious time, to have thought so little, cared so little for God, to have taken His love as a matter of course, how remorseful should we feel! Am I going to be hard-hearted in future? His love is the same, though I did not care to look at it. Father-like He has been watching to find His own way into my soul, and I have repelled Him, and turned away. Shame *must* take possession of my heart. Let it.

What acts should I make now? Acts of praise, of reverence, acts of humility, submission, conformity to God's Will. Now I devote myself to seeking first the kingdom of God ; now I devote myself to the study of Him, that thus I may be drawn to love Him, causing myself to see things as they truly are in Him, that I may live for the end for which He made me, in preparation for that unfailing praise, reverence and love which we shall give with all our hearts through the eternity in which He unites Himself to us for ever.

C O N F E R E N C E .

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON PRAYER AND CONFESSION IN RETREAT.

THE time we spend together is the intellectual part of our meditation. Don't listen as to a sermon. Of course the mere work of the understanding is not prayer of itself. Try to take what is said as the suggestion of Almighty God to your mind. We talk about "lights" in prayer. "Light" is a truth brought home to us so that we see its application to ourselves. It is quite right to take pains about the preparation for our meditation, but it is God's light we want. We can reckon *now specially* on the goodness of God to us. He will serve us with matter appropriate to *us*. Words will not have the same meaning to each. "*Omne delectamentum in se habentem.*" God takes care of that. If you were alone, it would not be necessary to take half the time for the understanding. While the points are proposed, select what suits you and keep hold of it, and make the best use of the time that remains, for that is the important part. Prayer means getting *as near to the Sacred Heart* as you can. Though you may be as dry as possible, yet you can always make acts of the will in your Saviour's presence. It is a

mistake to say, I am not inclined, so I will put it off. If you make these acts, you are praying in a more *meritorious* way. We must not dictate to God. It's foolish to lay it down that we know better than He does. Take what comes. If you have a great difficulty, go and humble yourself before God, and say it's a shame you should have such reluctance to come to His blessed Feet.

The "Reflection" which is suggested to you after the meditation is a very useful practice. It consists in going back on my meditation and making a little examination. What kind of meditation did I make? What sort of difficulties did I have? How did I meet them? If the answer is favourable, thank God for this mark of His goodness. See what made it go well. Learn to accumulate scraps of experience; see what you can put by. If the meditation went badly, be sorry then and there. Success is not good for us always; it is necessary we should break down sometimes. How often should we make acts of contrition if we always thought we had done very well? The more humility and contrition we have the better. It's not merely the failure and sorrow we must attend to; but perhaps there is some lesson, some warning which will help us in future. Now what have I learnt? Nothing. What promise have I made? None at all. That won't do. I can't afford to lose the graces of the retreat. While many are gaining so much, I am gaining nothing. What ought the meditation to have brought? You can find out what should have been the fruit. Pick it up, and when you have got it, keep it. Reflection is the instrument which applies to

after-life the meditation which has been made. Reflection may be made walking, sitting, how you like, using your pen, noting down what God has said to you.

Do remember that meditation is *prayer*. Make it as prayerfully as you can. We pray so little. We are so abominably self-satisfied. If we had a greater contempt for ourselves, we should make a more earnest prayer. I am afraid it is often slovenly done—hence so little real fruit. Prayer is our means of supernaturalizing ourselves. Without prayer we *can't* lead a supernatural life. Can't we mend our prayer? Can't we be more in earnest? The meditations are the main-bones of the retreat. Make *them*, if you can do nothing more.

With regard to your confession in retreat—a review of the past year is the wisest thing perhaps. You want your dispositions to be good, and it *is* useful to make more than the ordinary weekly confession. Remember the absolute necessity of caring for dispositions. Take as much pains as you can over your contrition. That is the best thing that you can do. Do not worry yourself to recollect many things, but be very sorry for those that come before you. Let it be the best confession you have ever made, because your dispositions are better than they ever were before.

F I R S T D A Y .

[5.45 P.M.]

T H E U S E O F C R E A T U R E S .

GOD made me for a special purpose, which entails happiness here and hereafter. We have to consider how His purpose is to be carried out by us in our use of creatures—which creatures are friends, which foes. The truth is that God gave all things on earth to be helps to us ; in one sense everything is a friend—even the devil ; but considering how strong our propensities are, how disposed we are to follow the inclinations of our lower nature, we must distinguish between friends and foes, things that are favourable and help us to God, and others which have to be overcome.

The first use of creatures is to see God in them—in all society, all combinations of circumstances. Happy shall we be if we do see God in all. Why should not He give me a difficulty to overcome? This is my time of probation. We must be tested as guns are tested. He never allows us to be over-tried ; He arranges all that He may receive glory through me. He means me to praise Him and serve Him in those circumstances in which I am placed. He means me to see Him in them, and if I do, the battle is half won. If we said, God intends to get glory by my being in these difficulties—He hides Himself but He is really

there,—how different would the difficulties appear!

Perhaps you fail most at home. Too often it is there that insubordinate nature asserts itself: company manners are off. Exactly there, God is. “A man’s foes are they of his own household.” He shows less charity to those at home, and God made that home, and He is there to be served there.

Riches and poverty! He is to be seen in both. He chooses what is to be our portion. He is behind it. He meant good to come out of it, and that we go and forget. All is made to help us to God, but instead of remembering this, we make these creatures an excuse. We say: “If I were alone, I could serve God.” Not true a bit. His service consists in being served *in the way in which He chooses*. It is a *grand end*, enough to make us look on creatures with veneration. Perfection consists in using creatures or laying them aside as God requires. My whole spiritual life consists in this. It is not easy to human nature. My will, my pleasure, my liking has nothing to do with it. What does it matter whether I like what I have to do or not? whether I wish to do it or not? Sometimes it is very hard indeed to make use of creatures just as God chooses, but what difference does that make?

Indifference means that detachment from our own will, which will enable us to carry out God’s will: it does not mean insensibility and recklessness. While our own wills are vehemently strong, God has no control over us. When we know the will of God, we have to will the same; so here indifference does not apply. His will changes, and it is not easy to keep

ourselves quite indifferent, but that is what we have got to do. He has chosen for us many things we like. We are to do them because He has chosen them, not because we like them. A good rule is, to go slowly to things we like, and briskly to those we don't like. Eagerness has to be checked in the things I like, but not in others. I am not to be listless and unhappy over what I do not like, but put brightness into it. This involves no slight mortification. There are plenty of things we don't like, which we have got to do, besides those we do like. In each let us not feed our natural inclinations, but look out for the will of God.

It is a good plan when we find ourselves with strong hopes and fears, to analyse them—why do I hope or fear? It is our will we have got to look to. We ought to be ready to do what God chooses. Nothing more is meant by indifference, but *nothing less*. It is the only way in which we can hope for happiness. We must make use even of sins and evil habits: good may be got out of all. Much humility may be got from looking at the harm we have done, we with all the Sacraments we have received, the many blessings that were intended to help us, which we have neglected.

What does God want of me? I am going to do that. It requires fidelity. The prayer to-day in commemoration of St. Apollinaris begins, "O God, *the rewarder of faithful souls*." He is going to reward fidelity, so we have to be faithful. Fulfilling His Will is no impossibility. Grace is ready waiting that we may overcome ourselves and be free to do what He wants. *God must prevail*. Don't be satisfied till you

can say from your hearts, "Whatever He wants He shall have." Don't be content till you feel you have not *one* hindrance. Your disposition should be a help, your past life a help, your family a help. All the excuses we make are absolutely unjustifiable. Go to God, tell Him you believe it, you know there is no valid excuse. Who could think such nonsense as that anything could rightly stand between him and God?

What does God want of me in my retreat? That I should make good meditations, good examens of conscience, good confessions, good communions, that there should be a vast improvement in the way in which I perform my duties, that I should acquire habits of prayer and recollection. See if you cannot raise the tone of your family circle, attend better to your household, do your daily work in a manner conducive to God's praise. Reformation of life is wanted. Open your mind and heart. Long for the fulfilment of God's will in you, and go to Him from whom alone grace can be obtained for it.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE MALICE OF SIN.

THE Will of God comes to us under grave precept, God commanding those things He is bound to command—commandments so essentially necessary that

to refuse to conform our hearts to them is to establish enmity with God. We are to meditate on the malice of sin. We cannot measure it fully, for God alone knows its real malice. But we can make a study of it and learn a great deal about it.

FIRST PRELUDE.—To imagine our souls imprisoned and cast out among the brutes.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition, that seeing the consequences of one grievous sin I should entertain the shame and confusion befitting one who has sinned frequently.

I.—FIRST. 'The sin of the angels. We are speaking of those nearest to God—those whom He had created with such glorious intelligences. He would not have them in Heaven till He had proved them. He had bestowed on them a splendid nature, wonderful graces, immense light and knowledge. What could exceed the foolishness of flinging it all away? They did, in order to be independent. They would no longer obey. What word is there for it? It seems positive insanity. That they, with their bright reason, should do this seems quite unintelligible.

SECOND. 'The sin of our first parents. Adam and Eve were perfectly happy in Paradise; everything was given to them with such liberality; what splendid faith was theirs! How easy for them to have persevered in grace! Yet they fell. One precept was given them as a test of their fidelity. How little a thing! They are persuaded it is an arbitrary precept to deprive them of an imaginary good. Who can describe their foolishness? They would not have their Father for their king: they would go forth from

that garden of delights, among thorns and thistles, sooner than submit to God.

THIRD. A fallen man resolves to commit a mortal sin, even though it involves the imminent peril of hell. Though he might be reconciled with his Creator, he prefers not to be : he dies the enemy of God, and is banished for all eternity into hell. What extraordinary folly !

II.—FIRST. The degradation of the angels is all the greater because of their former nobility—powerless to amend, incapable of setting themselves right, bewailing their folly, but not their sin, tempting men, deceiving them, trying to discourage everyone. What a miserable occupation for those who were created to be the courtiers of God in the kingdom of heaven !

SECOND. Degradation of men—losing self-control. What miserable consequences, even to the good ! How hard is the battle !

THIRD. Degradation of an immortal soul. It has trampled under foot the Precious Blood : it chooses the devil as its counsellor, it went into the snare with its eyes open and made itself the companion of devils.

III.—Application to ourselves. A sin is a sin in me, and brings the same consequences to me that it did to the angels and the unrepentant souls—foolishness, degradation. Have I had the horror of it I should have had ? How has God treated mortal sin ? He could not possibly have treated it differently : He gave angels and men abundant grace to avoid it. I am to bring home to myself the evil of sin. I want horror and shame. That which brings about such fearful consequences has just as great virulence in me.

I must ask God in all humility to show me what a wretch I am. He alone can teach me. So I place myself at the foot of the Cross, and ask Him to let me see what is His estimate of the sin that He pays for at such a price. I gaze into His eyes and remember it is for my sake that He suffers, in order that shame and confusion for it all may take possession of my guilty soul.

SECOND DAY.

[10 A.M.]

OUR OWN SINS.

WE are to meditate on our own sins : don't let us say *our*, but *my* sins—*my own* sins. Nothing is so completely my own as my sins ; the malice is quite my own. The worst of it is that I am so inclined to throw the fault on some one else. Eve did, Adam did. What a way we have of harping on our difficulties—palliating everything because of difficulties !

FIRST PRELUDE.—The prisoner brought forth to stand in the dock to be accused publicly.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition for a *real and hearty sorrow*. What more important grace can we ask for ? Sorrow not merely for the present, but a lasting sorrow for all the pain we have given to the Heart of Jesus.

FIRST. First we must take a rapid glance over our life—how much of it has been wasted, how much used badly ! Places that can testify about us—persons

with whom we have lived—the harm that we have done, the scandal we have given, how we have lowered the ideal of others. Positions we have filled as children, young children, parents, etc.,—how we performed the duties of our state of life. We glance over a mass of ill-spent time and wasted grace, for which we ask now real contrition.

SECOND. How evil sin is in itself, let alone its being prohibited ! It is a renouncing of God's sovereignty. He *only* prohibits for our good. To break His precepts is to quarrel with Him. There *must* be right and wrong. God cannot do anything against His own attributes, and here are we regretting it ! We should have known the natural law in an unfallen state that God has to be worshipped : the Third Commandment names a certain day for that worship, so it is not an arbitrary commandment. Being God, He desires that His creatures may be good. If we had not the light and knowledge that we have, what a difference would there be in our responsibility ! We know what He requires. If we are to be the crowning work of God on earth, there comes responsibility, a responsibility not to be dreaded, but acted on cheerfully, lovingly. The voice of conscience has always been intelligible, and we have gone against it.

Who are *we* ? We think too much of ourselves by far. Sin must be measured by the insult it offers to God. It is not as though we were on an equality with God and could make a concordat : we depend on Him entirely. Out of nothing we came. He made us for *Himself*. We have nothing we have not

received, nothing of our own. We have wasted what He has bestowed on us, used it against Him, and then we take up a high position as though we were proud of ourselves. All our puffing of ourselves up does not really make any difference. My *thinking* I had rights does not give them to me. My angel, my fellow-men don't think so.

What am I in comparison with God's creatures? And what are all creatures in comparison with God? There is no relation between the finite and the Infinite. If He spent eternity in creating, it would be as nothing in His presence. And *I—I* have dared to sin! Contenting myself with thinking, I am not worse than my fellows, I would go along in the stream. It is not so in reality. I have an immortal, reasoning soul, a soul that stands by itself, a soul that remains with the same responsibility as though it were all alone before God. Supposing I were by myself and had only God to think of, my relations to Him would not be altered in the least; my soul would be before His face *alone*. God says, "I took care you should know. I took care that your conscience should be enlightened. To me you were responsible, to no one else."

THIRD. What God is. Incomprehensible. Infinite. I can never comprehend Him. He could not create an intellect capable of comprehending Him; but I may have *some* comprehension of Him and understand against whom sin is committed.

How do saints and angels and beings on this earth treat me? All creation is in a sense at my feet, and I deserve the very opposite. I should have the

profoundest surprise that I am so well treated. Ought not God to have exerted His power and struck me out of creation? instead of which I find myself in a holy house, in a holy time, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and am told not that I *may* but that I *must* hope for heaven, that it would be a sin not to hope for heaven. Poor helpless creature that I am, thinking myself so capable, all nature helping me that I may know myself better—oh that I may make a true act of contrition! For that God gave me my breakfast this morning, that I might be able to make an act of contrition. How is it He is not tired of such a guilty useless creature? How is it He does not turn from me in disgust after the way in which I have grasped His gifts and used them against Himself?

I make my Colloquy at the foot of the Cross. How the Passion augments my ingratitude! That He should have poured out His Blood for us, that He cannot keep away from us, that He is as really present here as any one of us, is enough to make us ashamed. He who hung on the Cross is here. He whose Blood was shed on Calvary is here. He who rose from the dead is here. He did not despise us. He looked down in tenderest love and never ceased to care, however malicious we have been. To think we should have offended him! cared so little for Him, offended Him that we might please ourselves, heaped injury on injury, insult on insult! Oh! when we contemplate our own utter vileness and then see the Sacred Heart open for us—surely we can have no difficulty in making a real act of contrition!

CONFERENCE.

SECOND DAY.

[3 P.M.]

MEDITATION AND SELF-EXAMINATION.

A QUESTION is asked. What are we to do when we don't know what God's Will is? It is often God's Will that we should be in suspense about what His Will is. If we have taken pains to ascertain it, and have to act before His Will is clear to us, we are free to act as we think best. There is a strong tendency to impatience in us; we rebel against suspense.

How are you to make your meditations when the retreat is over? To begin with you may take the subjects of the retreat. Go over the ground again. Take the life of our Lord as told in the gospel narrative. There is nothing to compare with the life and Passion of our Lord. In time of retreat everything seems so easy; it does not look so plain afterwards. That is the advantage of going back and resting on the great truths. If you want to meditate well, read. Augment your knowledge. Read something spiritual *every* day: it is a great pity not to do it. Some minds lie fallow seemingly as regards spiritual things—seemingly, but not really, for they are planting

weeds. In the lives of the saints suggestions are perpetually coming. Try to get all the good you can out of what you read. One little thing that occurs to yourself is more profitable than what you get from others. Prepare your meditation from your spiritual reading: it is very desirable there should be a combination. Take some good solid spiritual book, read it first as spiritual reading, and then go back and say what is there here will do me good if I dwell upon it in my prayer? What you find for yourself will be more profitable than what is put all ready for you. To use meditation books is a little bit like swimming with corks. Go in search of your experience yourself.

Now for a few words on the daily examen of conscience. It is a grand thing to be preparing your confession every day, and this you do if you set aside a time each evening—ten or fifteen minutes—for self-examination. I do not mean that you are to spend all that time perambulating over the day, seeing what you have done. No, first look quietly and see what do I owe in the way of thanksgiving to God? We know fast enough what *we* have done, but do we always remember what God has done for us? It will be a curious day if there is not much, *very* much God has done. His goodness to us in our sleep and waking, in the communion we may have received, in giving us food, in the work He has set us to do, the chances we have had of doing good to people, the spiritual book in which God was speaking to me, anything that came specially home to me. There are plenty of things to thank God for,

the next thing is to do it. We forget that often, we say, "I ought," but don't. Then in past life—the way He has helped us, the graces He has sent in our Baptism, our call to the true faith, our Redemption through his death, that he left his Church and Vicar to guide us, that He Himself is so accessible, prepared to hear us when we lift our voice. Oh ! there is plenty to thank Him for. Is a quarter of an hour too long, longer than what you waste in gossip ?

Then the prayer you are going to make. How often we go into God's presence without any prayer for help. Those saints whose minds rose quickest to God were the most careful about their preparation for prayer ; they did not leave it to the chance of the moment. Take in all you are going to do in your prayer. Ask God to help you in everything. An anxious conversation, your own temper or self-love—take care you put it all in your prayer. See that your acts of contrition are put into it, and these acts are to be in preparation for confession. Why not also take that into your prayer ? Do it heartily, try to get near God, bring what you are about for God's blessing—that is your prayer.

Then comes the examen. Go quietly through the day, or take which way suits you best. What sort of temper did I get up with ? How about spiritual duties ? How did I get through that interview ? Perhaps this might lead to many distractions—so let us say, "What did my guardian angel think of that ?" It was a warm conversation. Look only at the spiritual side. Your angel did not care whether you shone or not, only whether you

were getting nearer to heaven, getting better of your infirmities. *You* were thinking, "How many excuses there were for my giving way to my infirmities!" My angel is given me for a friend—one peculiarly interested in me. "Point out, dear angel, what I could have done better, what I omitted that I should have done, where I behaved wrongly." He has much to say, and the power to say it. Then you will find much you had not thought of yourself. You have written a letter; don't think whether it was a success, but was it what God wanted? Reading—was that exactly what God wanted?

Now comes the act of contrition. Don't despise attrition. Even where there is no mortal sin, nevertheless there is matter for attrition in venial sins and imperfections. Deliberate imperfections are displeasing to God and may give me a tendency towards more grievous venial sins. I am afraid of the consequences of venial sin—motive of attrition. My day has had so many imperfections. I should have had a higher place in heaven for eternity had I acted better. Pass on to contrition. Look at things with God's eyes—what does he think of forgetfulness of Him, neglect of His graces, doing things without any reference to Him? How good He has been—and what a meagre return I have made to Him to-day! Such thoughts should lead to a good act of contrition: unless you take pains this won't come.

Then a purpose of amendment has to impress itself upon the day to come. If you don't make it, the current will take you downwards. This "purpose"

is to make us better each day ; it won't come of itself, so we must make our resolution. What have I got to mend ? Such and such a thing. Look and see how it is to be done. Your temper—why did you lose it ? See what steps are to be taken to avoid losing it in future.

'Then what is coming to-morrow ? These things are going to happen. I must take care. I have got this to do. I must take pains to do it well. Analyse your duties and see what you can do with the component parts. If these are right, the duties will be.

S E C O N D D A Y .

[5.45 P.M.]

HELL.

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a composition of place let us consider the height and breadth and depth of the great prison house.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition that if at any time, owing to our venial sins, the love of God were to wax cold within us, and we no longer to care for Him that love would prevent us from offending Him, at least we may be prevented by the thought of hell.

What a condescension of God that we should have such a protection from sin ! He puts this thought before us and bids us see what losing our soul would mean. That we know about hell comes from God's love. He, as it were, vouchsafes to say, " Do let Me

make you see what sin is, and what punishment I am *obliged* to give it."

What should I be if there were no such place as hell? It is a truth; why should I not get the good I can out of it? It makes me understand God's holiness and how necessary it is His Will should be done. Mortal sin consists in attachment to the creature and aversion from the Creator: the pain of sense is for the one, the pain of loss for the other. Every mortal sin means hostility to God. Venial sin only contains the element of attachment to creatures in a sinful degree. Of the pain of sense in hell we only know that it is greater than any earthly pain. Each soul and evil spirit can see what sin each pain is for. That which is represented by the punishment is the malice of the sin. A sin can be committed internally: it is in the will that the act lies: alas! even the lightest degree of punishment is of very great intensity; inflicted by a God of Justice, it cannot be too much. The pain of loss varies according to the degree of malice. Souls don't all lose the same God in the same way. People who are in enmity with God could not go to heaven, but that which they are losing they know. Those who have hated Him most here will see most plainly what they have lost. The malice comes from turning against God, and those who have known Him best have most malice. The well-instructed Catholic has a heavier punishment than the ill-instructed Catholic, and the punishment of these latter is heavier than that of those outside the Church and Pagans. What a lesson to bring home to ourselves to keep that malice from us,

because for us, with our responsibilities, its punishment would be so great ! All our graces are intended to take us so high : the worse for us if we fall.

In the next world there are no means by which the creature can get the grace of God, so the punishment must be eternal. Jesus Christ did not die that damned souls might be redeemed, He died for souls on their probation. Hell would not be a final state if it could be changed. God might have made Purgatory a probation, but He has not done so. 'Those who are God's friends when they die continue to be His friends for ever, and God's enemies the same. The eternity of heaven depends on the same reason as the eternity of hell, and this dispels all hope in hell. Here despair is a sin ; it is no sin in hell, because it can't be helped : in hell we *must* despair. Whether men like it or not, this is simply true, necessarily true. If man has free-will and makes a bad use of it and dies unrepentant and in enmity with God, hell is a necessity. Here it is different, and how thankful we should be for the sacrament of penance which makes attrition sufficient for the forgiveness of sin.

Look at the company in hell. The lost souls are all together ; there is nothing to separate them from the devils. The more there are in hell, the worse hell will be. How do you suppose the devils who tempted you will treat you ? Here in this world even, what an amount of harm they can do ! There, there will be no one to interfere for the weak ; it will be a great state of persecution and no good coming from it, the suffering purely penal, absolutely useless. Here we can turn all suffering into gold if we bear it for

God, but in hell there is no use in it. "Fear not them who can kill your body and after that have no more that they can do," our Lord said. Persecutors can't touch your soul, they are perfectly helpless as regards that; but in hell there are martyrdoms to be gone through and nothing to come of it. Then here there is the Divine Providence, making all things work together for good: in hell, none. Think what sin must be if it forces God to treat His creatures thus. He cannot help considering what they have done.

What must it be never to see a good spirit! All the basest are in hell, having persevered in evil right to their death. What must it be to hear nothing but blasphemies, falsehoods against God! It is plain to the lost souls that their punishment is quite just. What must it be to be in the midst of those who never say or do any good? The terrible thing is, one mortal sin will place us in this position. The inhabitants of hell have this in common—*they have refused the grace of God.*

Hell is a revelation to us of what sin is, though not so powerful a revelation as the Passion. What a tale is our redemption of what sin is, and what hell is! We should conceive the most tremendous hatred of sin, sin being so detestable that God must treat it in this manner. If I had had my deservings, I should have been in hell—that I am here, not there, is due to the mercy of God. If I commit a venial sin, I put my face towards hell—a tolerably dangerous thing. We can only turn our back on hell when we live as God wills us; but when we are not fulfilling

the Divine Will, we are always in danger. What a lesson this teaches us of the life we should lead ! If we don't want to run risks, it's absolutely necessary that we should spend our lives doing the Will of God. We never should know how God hates sin and what He has done for us had it not been for hell ; and we never can have that confidence that we have so much fervour we shall not fall. You remember how St. Teresa saw the place that would be hers in hell if she went on carelessly, though she never lost the state of grace. She turned her back on hell, lived for God and became a saint. We are in greater danger than she was. Let us see that we leave sin and devote ourselves to God. Let us by the help of hell make sure of going to heaven.

SECOND DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

DEATH.

Is it not a singular thought that after a short lapse of time we shall all be gone ? It is an extremely difficult thing to realize of oneself. Do what I will, I can't bring it home to myself. I hope I *shall* realize it before it comes. Meanwhile I must take it as a most certain truth. There is nothing but obscurity as regards death. We have no knowledge when or where it will come : all this God has kept back, because He can't trust me with the knowledge.

So I am in this tremendous uncertainty, whether I shall live till the morning. Deaths are happening all round ; it would be the extremest folly to reckon on setting things right just before I die : the uncertainty is precisely that I may make ready. Sudden death is no rarity, and then those who are prepared, are prepared. I hope the difficulty of realizing death will add to my merit, if I put myself always into the hands of God, if I prepare myself to die in whatever way Almighty God may choose, leaving my death entirely in His Hands. Has not everything He has done for us been the best? How completely He is preparing us for His presence—even for the rigid searching that must take place—and *now* He is giving us the time of retreat to prepare. We are getting nearer and nearer ; it can't be very far ; ten years, twenty years, would make a material difference in our lives. Perhaps before very long there will be a death amongst *us*, and the others will say, "How happy to have been taken after that retreat." It may be that that one will be the most to be envied, to have gone out of the world where we cannot offend our Lord, to be where the veil shall be broken down and we shall see Him as He is with the sacred wounds He received for us. Let our retreat make us ready.

Our death may be sudden and unexpected, God grant it may not be unprovided. Death may come preluded by an illness, long or short. Ah, those illnesses when people excuse everything, when bystanders overlook imperfection upon imperfection and even sin upon sin ! What a preparation ! How

apt we are to excuse ourselves even for a trifling illness ! It is certainly sad how people often end their lives with an amount of self-indulgence and impatience they have never manifested before. The suffering which should have hastened our entry into heaven may retard it.

If we are told we are dying, we may go quietly to work, though we shall be at a disadvantage. We may drop off to sleep, when we should want to make our thanksgiving after Holy Viaticum. We have so to practise now that when sickness comes we may have acquired good habits of receiving the sacraments and bearing pain and crosses. Some things we can evidently do, think of it continually, especially when we make our daily examen of conscience. Am I ready for confession and absolution, in proper dispositions for the sacraments and so ready to die ? If we put that test, it will help us to make the requisite acts more effectively. It is God's grace which enables us to look into our hearts.

When we come to die, the Church gives us absolution, Holy Communion, Extreme Unction, and the last blessing. The first two we can practise all our life. We wish our last confession and communion to be perfect. That will depend much on how the previous ones have been made, a consideration which will prevent our lapsing into careless ways. Extreme Unction belongs to the time of death : it is intended to detach us from earth. How often through this sacrament people are rendered willing to die ! Its grace is that they should make a good death and do all that dying souls should do. What

an important moment must that be for which God has instituted a special sacrament! We can't practise dying, but we may prepare and get ourselves ready for it. Let us spend half-an-hour to-morrow preparing for it and make our confession and communion for that end. We can read the office for administering Extreme Unction. Each sense is anointed. The last blessing is meant for the moment of death; the only condition is that you should breathe the Holy Name of Jesus. May that be the last word we shall utter. In a moment we shall be in His Presence. What better preparation can we have than His Name!

The condition for gaining the Plenary Indulgence is to be free from attachment to any venial sin. No plenary indulgence can be gained so long as we are attached to venial sin. We can practise the dispositions which are absolutely necessary. His grace will help us to be detached. We have got to make our acts of humility—offer our death, knowing we deserve it and taking it as a punishment; of adoration, making it as a sacrifice we owe. What greater thing have we to give to God than this? Acts of contrition, faith, hope, believing in God and His Church—hope for the future so soon to commence; acts of love and gratitude to Him who is so good to us; acts of conformity to His Will. To desire our death may be conformable to His Will. All these acts we can make now. Let us practise them, go through them as though half-an-hour afterwards we were to die. Pray that you may forfeit none of what God has given to you. The series of our actions is rapidly

running out. Let us do all God is asking us, *in the way in which He wishes*, so that when His unknown time shall come we may die as we have lived *in accordance with His Will*.

THIRD DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

COMPOSITION OF PLACE.—Where we die. In an instant a momentous change. Those who have been attending us are attending now to a poor helpless body—the soul is in the presence of its Creator. I appear before my Lord to be judged by Him, to have my eternal lot assigned to me.

PETITION—that I may so anticipate that judgment now that then I may have no cause to fear.

What a change for the better! No longer any distracting or evil tendencies. *Now* I have to persuade myself to do God's Will; there are interruptions of sleep, negligences of nature, innumerable drawbacks, wrong tendencies always to be struggled against; and *there* is absolute perfect concentration on God and the affairs of God. How insignificant all mere earthly things become! But this life is given that I may merit a nearer approach to God for all eternity. *Here* there is a voluntariness about my service of God, a real choice which will not be *there*. There is something grand in having that power of free-will.

The day will come when life with its disabilities and privileges will end, and I shall be face to face with my Lord. What shall I feel? That will depend upon what the character of my service has been. Will it be an overwhelming sense of joy that all is over—or great shame and confusion and regret for lost opportunities? Which will it be? Where shall I be looking? Down?—or up into His Face? Shall I be feeling remorse or gratitude? Our Lord will go through my life. I can't bear to rehearse it to myself now: what shall I feel when He brings it before me and judges me with absolute justice? I shall recognise His justice. He shows me my motives, all that animates me. We have had our life, knowing about the judgment. We have had it in our power to regulate our life and to conform it to His Will. He means us to use *each* grace. Look how that action *ought* to have been done, and then, how you *did* it. Take *one* thing,—look at it now, and then with His explanation. Why should I so live that any portion of my life should cause me shame and regret? How much He loves me, how many sacraments He has given me! He hears me always whenever I pray to Him. His Heart is ever ready to welcome me. Whom better could I choose for my Judge than He who has so loved me? Yes, but He is infinite Justice, and He will tell me the truth. I might have known it before, had I not loved deception. *Then* I shall know the truth. I have used my power of making excuses so freely, I shall have worn it out by then. I shall see not only the sinfulness but the good that I did—how I

outlived for myself the life to come. Where there was correspondence to grace, there will be a reward. Where there was imperfection, I shall see what a reward might have been. My sin—I shall see how it was forgiven, what dispositions were required, what was due to it when committed, what due now. Our Lord will mark out my place in Purgatory for me.

In the minutest way my life will be brought before me. I shall never forget it, for the length of my Purgatory and my place in heaven depend upon it. How near I shall be to God, the degree of glory that shall be mine, depends on the life that is ended. How little we think of this! We go through our prayers as a duty; and *that day* is going to influence our eternity. It will be too late then to say, "Give me back that day." If our Lord's judgment were spoken now, what a tremendous effect it would have!

Yet we are to act upon it, as He has made known these great consequences. I can do now every single thing with that end in view. His longing desire is to be able to reward every single thing, and we disappoint Him when we don't enable Him to do it.

Let us imagine that our Lord has gone through our life with us, and that our hearts have ratified His sentence. How ashamed we shall feel! How sincerely we shall acknowledge ourselves not fit for heaven! What a relief to go to Purgatory to satisfy the justice of God! Then we shall know how detestable sin is: the true feeling about it will take possession of us. There was something in the

blazing glory of our Redeemer's face which made us realize that heaven would be intolerable till the debt is paid. Oh ! that first interview with our dear Lord !—He finding all sorts of loving things to say to us, giving us credit for everything He can and thanking us for it. How we shall wish we had used His graces adequately. It will be too late then to begin, but we can make our start now, as though we had already heard His voice, and our hearts been filled with the consciousness of His love and of the value He sets on the least thing we do for Him : we can undo all the evil of the past, we can bring our hearts to Him, we can set our intentions right, we can put into our spiritual exercise and our daily duties not merely bare necessary fervour, but *all the fervour we can throw into them*, in order to make them as pleasing to our divine Lord as possible.

Now we can change all that remains of our life, now we can be faithful to grace, now we can show our love and do deeds of devotion and sacrifice. We have to put into our lives the right principles, to live as those would live who know they have to appear before Him and to listen to Him passing judgment on them. He is here in the midst of us, He at whose feet we shall be kneeling when we die. Oh to think we can now put ourselves into His Hands, and remember that what we have to do is to lead a life of pleasing Him in everything, He ready to help us, He ready to show us how ! He desires to help us. Surely this is the moment of resolving to prepare ourselves for that day when unveiled we shall see Him as He is, and hear from His adorable

lips what is to be our destiny, what the use we have made of all the love He has lavished upon us.

CONFERENCE.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

VENIAL SIN AND THE SACRAMENTS.

ANSWER to question.—I think the *guilt* of venial sin must be shaken off at the moment of death. I am incapable of understanding how people could be attached to sin when the reality of the other world is before them. To suppose that there should be slow growth in Purgatory is nonsense. To gain a plenary indulgence our wills must be right. We must see there is no guilty adhesion which is sinful now, e.g., love of ourselves, vain-glory, human respect; as long as that attachment lasts, it makes us incapable of gaining a plenary indulgence. People go to Holy Communion in venial sin through inadvertence. It is good to accuse ourselves of venial sin; it will help us to be sorry and get forgiven.

One reason why we get so little at Holy Communion is because we forget venial sins. It is not requisite to *recollect* them, but it is requisite to be sorry for them. Forgotten venial sins can be forgiven as mortal sins can be. We can make a general act of contrition which includes all sins,

venial as well as mortal. I know my chief failings. I can also bring them to my Lord in Holy Communion and get forgiveness, *if I am sorry*. People seldom get a plenary indulgence because they seldom try, and they seldom try because they seldom think of it. An act of sorrow sets the will right. An obstinate venial sin even does not prevent us from getting *some* grace from sacraments, but we don't get nearly so much. You may have confessed a particular venial sin without purpose of amendment, yet it is not a sacrilegious confession. The *necessity of purpose of amendment* refers to mortal sin, the Council of Trent says. How easy our Lord has made both sacraments, that we should be in a state of grace or in the disposition that will put us into that state. A single venial sin will do as matter for confession if you are sorry for it, or some sin of your past life you have no adhesion to. All God wants is sorrow for one sin you mention, and a purpose then and there never to commit a mortal sin. It is not true to say that if you sin afterwards you had not a real sorrow. Look how easy our Lord makes it; why should we be unhappy? If He has made it so easy, I am going to please Him, I am going to be generous with Him.

A word about Holy Communion. I thought it was better to keep you away from it for these two days. I want you to make use of this abstention by trying to get an idea of the Majesty of God and reviving the fear of our Lord in your heart. How beautiful He is! What dispositions should we have! Utilise the deprivation of Holy Communion. When

for example you are on a journey, humble yourself and say you don't deserve to go. People forget these sort of things, and it's wasteful to forget them. Shan't we have a *Domine non sum dignus* when we can't go as well as when we can?

To-morrow we shall have the example of our Lord before us, we shall be watching Him, picking up lessons from His life ; so it is time we should go to Holy Communion. During the remainder of the retreat make as many Communions as you can, and as carefully as possible. Do all you can to improve your disposition. If we can only go out of retreat having arranged how to improve our confessions and communions, it will be a splendid result.

THIRD DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

THIS is a transitional meditation. Its object is to see how God has treated us and how we may trust Him—a subject that is suitable after confession. *We* have got to learn that we must not wander away again. We must learn to value the love of our Father. Pray for this and for confidence in Him to lead the life that ought to come easy to us.

In this parable our Saviour draws His own portrait, yet it falls short of the reality: the infinite beauty of the original can be represented in no

picture whatever. The sons shared in all their father's possessions. He treated them with perfect confidence. What a tale it tells of the father! Think of the insolence of the younger son's demand—"Give me the portion of substance that falleth to me." The father makes no resistance to the unreasonable demand—why? It is *better* I should trust him; if he is bad now, he will mend: if I don't shew myself a true father, he will lose confidence in me, he won't come back. Thus he treats the intending prodigal. It is just the same with Almighty God. Creatures are all His, and He puts them into our hands with confidence. He treats us as a father treats his children. It has to be brought home to us that *He is our Father*. That is the great idea for each one of us. We are gathered all together under our Father's eyes.

Think of the father's feelings. How hard for him to bear—the seeing his son caring only for his gifts, not for his father! This happens when we make a bad use of creatures. We use them to attack God with, as though we had some insult to avenge, God looking down with such love and compassion. In that state man was when his redemption was decreed.

The prodigal goes away—as far as possible. He knows there was nothing tyrannical in his father—yet he must have a *will*, and he wants to get away to a far country. When we are told we should practise recollection, what does it mean but that naturally we go as far from God as we can? By getting the thought of God away, man gets more comfortable.

The prodigal runs through all he had. He thought he should be happy if he had his own way, and not see the unapproving look in his father's face. Self-will gets possession of us. With what result? Disappointment for certain. The prodigal is dissatisfied, he is not happy a bit. What is worldliness but a life of experiments and endless disappointments? It is not in created things to give happiness. He won't open his eyes to the fact that he was made for something nobler. A famine comes, and he has to look about for necessary bread, and lets himself out to a citizen to do the work of a slave—to feed swine and keep close to them. There is no difficulty in making comparisons with the life he has been leading in the city with that of inordination and venial sin—those inordinations in which we allow our wills to rule us. The life of feeding swine is mortal sin—the degradation of slavery to the devil. Happily he sets himself free from this slavery. The slavery of bad habits has to be *broken*, not got rid of little by little. Then comes the thought that his father loves him—that thought the father *meant* should come to him,—but his idea of his father's goodness falls short of the reality. “I will arise and go to my father;” his outrages had been committed against his father, yet certainly his father will receive him tenderly: he had the right dispositions. “I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.” There is his petition made in a spirit of humility. Instead of saying, “Anywhere but to my father,” which the devil would suggest, he

says, "I am no more worthy:" it would not be a reason for going home were it not *such* a father. What does he owe to his master? Nothing. If he hesitates, he will lose the heart to go home. He arose and went. What a long journey it seemed, *his* journey home! He came away thinking little of the distance—now he finds how far it is. But he has the spirit of penance, and he perseveres. Weary, foot-sore, dirty,—who would recognise him? All have not his father's spirit; he can't reckon on his elder brother even; and the servants and neighbours—what will they say? "No good your going on to your home." How hard-hearted we can be! But he has courage in his heart when he thinks of his father: My father! I will trust my father! The difficulties increase as he gets nearer, yet he goes on saying, "Father, I have sinned," repeating it again and again. And his father, who has been expecting his return, recognises him at once; the son falls down and begins on his knees, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" and in a moment his father's arms are round him, and he says to his servants, "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." What is there that makes the father's heart so glad? "Let us eat and make merry because this *my* son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found." No word of reproach, nothing but welcome, the best robe, the feast, the joy that he should have come back. If our Lord tells us of the brother's anger, it is to bring out more the

rejoicing of the father. And the poor prodigal, with the knowledge of what he is, so different from the others, having gone against so loving a father—how can you imagine pride in *him* and disdainful words? And if that brother shows how he begrudged the father's love, would he not say, "I deserve it all, I forfeited my right, who *but* my father could treat me so well?"

This then is what we must learn—the knowledge of God as our Father, and the knowledge of ourselves. What kind of dispositions should we come back with? We have none of that compunction. We take our forgiveness as a matter of course, as though it were *nothing* that the Son of God should have hung on the cross and given His blood as a perpetual bath for guilty souls. Surely I am not going to forget I am a penitent, with so much of my life wasted, with opportunities used so poorly! When I look at Him on the Cross, I should return in a very different spirit. There is nothing I can possibly give Him, nothing I can withhold from Him, to offer Him some proof that I value His love and am going to live as the loving child of such a Father.

THIRD DAY.

[8.30 P. M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

IN this meditation we are taught the manner in which St. Ignatius wishes us to follow our Lord. We look

at Him going about the towns and villages, making His elections, choosing people to follow Him. Everyone has a vocation. All of us have His work to do, and we are asking now the dispositions with which we are to do it, that we turn no deaf ear to His call and be prompt and diligent in obeying it. St. Ignatius gives us a parable of an earthly king—a Christian king. He goes out to fight God's battles and makes his invitation to such as will follow him. It is a splendid programme to follow him; he is so great that all others are subject to him; he is certain of victory; he asks those who follow him and fight to be sharers in his triumph. He says, "I will be there myself, and go through all you will go through. I take no exemptions. We shall fare alike. I shall march with you, carry burdens like you, have rough food and the hard earth for my bed. I share all hardships and dangers with you—long marches, night sentries, hazardous expeditions—in the thick of the battle I shall be." This is in order that we may understand the character of the leader.

St. Ignatius puts out of his parable the shrinking, cowardly people. He is not giving his exercises to people of that sort. There are only two classes—the inferior to act as a foil to the superior. The lower class give themselves entirely to their work and show themselves good soldiers: they are not looking out for the position of highest honour, but they take their share willingly. They don't relish the hardships, but they face them.

Another class is not satisfied with that. They are not thinking of themselves, they are thinking only of

their chief. They can't keep away from him, they aim at being as near to him as possible. *He* will take the *worst* fatigue and danger : in the ranks I shall look for him, and if he is doing more I shall do more. I will hold back from nothing, Blows will fall thickest where he is ; I shall be repaid if he turns to me and tells me he is satisfied. Our Lord has unquestionably greater love for those who care for Him and want to be near Him.

We may resolve to be the good soldiers ; we may resolve to do our duty, do what He wants, commit no mortal sin, no deliberate venial sin ; we have got to ask our blessed Lord to make us into good soldiers—anything short of that is a piece of folly. Then there is the other class who watch Him and imitate Him. His life is different from what the world admires. It can admire, indeed, His doing good ; but His humility, His taking up the Cross, it can't understand. Those perfect Christians who are most like our Lord must be despised by the world. We will try whether in our measure we can be amongst this happy number. Whereas He voluntarily took poverty, we must strive to imitate Him in the most perfect degree of humility to which we can attain. Let us make sure of the solid part first, and then let us see how we can aspire to these nobler feelings that are entertained only by noble and generous souls.

FOURTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE INCARNATION.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The whole surface of the world to be redeemed. The little chamber at Nazareth where our Lady dwelt preparing for the Incarnation, but not knowing that she was to have part in it.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Pray that we may *know* our King and love Him better, and that there may be a perfect conformity of our lives to His Will.

FIRST. *The Necessity of the Incarnation.* Look at all the races of men destitute of grace, that is, look at what they would have been were it not for the expected Incarnation, had they been left to themselves. Not one would have had the hope of Heaven ; there would have been a fearful waiting for judgment with no remedy, all sunk in sin—every possible variety, but variety of evil, pride, *i.e.*, independence of God, the absence of that humility which is *necessary* that we should be the children of God.

There was a *moral necessity* for a Redeemer. God chose the most efficacious way for the redemption of the world. He chose the way by which the eternity of the redeemed should be more glorious : it was an incomparably grander revelation of God than

had been given before. We should not have known Him without it. Men would have been forgetful and ignorant : they would not have known the value of sacrifice, the going against self. His incarnate life was put before men that they might be drawn to Him, and see in His actions how admirable His doctrine was. He would teach by example, and therefore He chose the method of redemption by the Incarnation. We should have the *intensest* gratitude that we *are* redeemed, and that He redeemed us just in *this* way. How can we ever be grateful enough for this great benefit, and also that we live *after* the redemption? We should be animated with an immense zeal for the souls that needed that redemption, and for those who are not in possession of all the fruits of that redemption. Souls who have never heard of Him get the benefit of His redemption. Grace is hanging over the heathen, and, though they may not know it, He yet watches over them individually, and hereafter we shall be astonished at the multitude of those who have been baptised with the baptism of desire. He leads them on in His tenderness—not one will be lost, except through his own wilfulness. Each has God speaking to him and may get to heaven. But what a zeal ought to be enkindled in us, if we with all our helps still find it difficult to get to heaven ! What tender compassion for those in the dark, who know so much less than we do ! What compassion for all those who know something, but have not all the helps that we have ! Ah ! how many act so faithfully up to their light ! How many have died in invincible ignorance,

and made better use of what God gave them than we have ! In Purgatory we shall compare our lives with theirs. All the grace they had was owing to the Incarnation—the shadow of Peter passing by and curing them. What if the Incarnation were taken away ? We feel we could not have done without it.

SECOND. Now let us look at the *manner* in which our Lord vouchsafed to take our nature. We know the story of the Annunciation. It was pride all the enemies of God had in common,—pride in claiming independence of God ; and therefore we shall expect to find *humility*, and so we do from the beginning to the end of the history of the Incarnation. Gabriel is the bearer of the message that God will take man's nature. “To which of the angels said He, Thou art my son ?” And here Gabriel has to carry to the human race the news that the Eternal Word is to be made man. The angels must have felt how God had been outraged, and after such outrages to hear that He was going to assume human nature—what a revelation to Gabriel ! He accepts it at once. It is a declaration of the Divine Will that brings a large accession of knowledge of God and of what God was capable. It was impossible for Gabriel to work out at once so unfathomable a mystery ; the angels may spend eternity in looking into it ; but it could be no difficulty to him, because he saw God in the Beatific Vision : as being a mystery of sublime beauty he prostrates himself and worships it as the handiwork of his God. He comes down with humility and obedience *at once*, and rejoices at having been chosen as God's messenger to the lowly

maiden of Nazareth. With Lucifer it is always self-aggrandisement ; with Gabriel, forgetfulness of self ; how infinitely grander ! He instantly humbles himself ; there is not a shadow of rebellion that God should take a lower nature and raise it above his own. He sees the profundity of the humiliation in God : were it not for that, His majestic glory would alone fill the angelic hosts ; but the Incarnation makes them give a profounder homage. Gabriel comes then to this lowly maiden full of veneration : he knows far better than we do what it is to be chosen to be Mother of God. He understood the greatness of the dignity in a very different way from what we can.

We must think of *our Lady's humility*. She, the only one not touched with sin, she who never fell short of the graces given her, was brought into a relationship with God, which *no one* could share. She could not have been greater than she was (though the finite can always have more added) : no portion of grace in her was lost ; she was raised to that sanctity through her co-operation. She must have known she had never offended God and was free from sin. She empties herself with perfect humility. *To God* she attributes all her graces. So, too, we may recognise the gifts God gives us, saying, "I am absolutely incapable of myself, any flaw in the work is mine, all else is God's." This was true of Mary as of us. Our Lord's humility is the same. The creature receives all from his Creator ; we may rejoice in God's works in ourselves also. It never entered Mary's mind that she was to be the Mother of the

Messiah. The Jews expected Him, but they did not know He was to be born of a Virgin. It was the matrons who expected the blessing. The height of Mary's ambition was to be the handmaid of the mother of the Messiah ; what humility ! Read her Magnificat. Those humble words are said by the most glorious creature God has made.

Then look at *our Lord*. Humility is to set everything right. How could God be humble ? It was only by taking human nature that He was capable of humility, and could submit Himself to His Father. This He did at once ; as inferior to the Father He humbles Himself. If God could not do an act of humility, He could do an act of condescension, and He passes from the infinity of the Godhead to the inferiority of the human nature. He did not merely *adopt* a human nature ; He created a human nature on purpose that it should be the human nature of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. But *now* He is capable of humility, and His *first* act as man was to humble Himself—an act which must necessarily have taken precedence of every other act—an act of prostration before the Majesty of God, praising Him, reverencing Him and serving Him ; and now there ascended to God from earth a most perfect worship. There was humility throughout our blessed Saviour's life, there will be humility throughout eternity—an infinite humility. He was willing the Incarnation always : that was an act of humility in Him. There is no faith and hope in Heaven, but there is humility and love. That humility and love are always there, by which He is always ratifying the decree of the

Incarnation: "Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation." He is perpetually emptying Himself—all through His life on earth, all through eternity. And He gives us an example. Where could we have an example that could surpass this great example? And where ought to facilitate our humility to compare with the sight of the humility of the Son of God?

C O N F E R E N C E .

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE PARTICULAR EXAMEN AND METHODS OF
ELECTION.

THE Particular Examen means an instrument in the hands of anyone who is in earnest, with which to make progress in virtue. Particular examen is a duty which serves as a test as to the condition of fervour in the soul. Am I tepid or fervent? If you are practising Particular Examen well, you may make a favourable judgment: if you have dropped it, it is because you have lost fervour. There is something to be done about it three times in the day—on getting up, at mid-day and at night: it is a duty that can be done very briefly, but requires to be anchored to certain

times. Mid-day for people in the world may sometimes be impossible ; unless you feel certain you can manage it, make only two examens, but it is better to make three.

With regard to the morning—to start the day well make a recommendation of your soul to God, asking His blessing ; take the Apostleship of Prayer and make your dedication of yourself ; it is pretty nearly the only prayer to which the indulgence is granted without forming the words on the lips, and for which an interior act alone suffices. *Recall* the subject matter of your meditation. Keep it consciously by you ready for use as soon as you wake. Then turn to your Particular Examen. All depends on the will. The Particular Examen awakens the will at once. It is necessary to keep the will up to the mark. You put in this subject of your Particular Examen either some fault you have to avoid or some virtue you are trying to acquire, and renew the resolution of keeping to it *to-day*. Try how *strongly* that act can be made. There are so many failures because of flabby wills. There is nothing like strengthening your will *in one particular* ; general things are of little use. Particular Examen is a concentration of force : be really in earnest about that.

If the will is in proper order, the day won't go by without adverting to the Particular Examen : things happen to distract you, and you find you are getting careless ; use your ingenuity to keep your mind on it. Are we keeping faith with God ?

The Particular Examen may be, as I said, on a fault or a virtue. You have immense freedom in your

choice. Perhaps you have some bad habit, such as answering snappishly, for example. Take at first a fault of that sort which affects other people ; something in your way of speaking—interrupting people in conversation, having the last word ; set to work and cure any defect of that sort ; it may not be the most important, but it's capital to begin with. Or you may take up the practice of some virtue—humility, charity, doing things to please others, thinking beforehand what you can do and pledging yourself to do it. It is a splendid machinery for introducing the small end of the wedge. It is a good thing to vary the subject of the Particular Examen, to have a change occasionally ; for instance, we might take up “keeping silence when in pain” for a week or two, and then go back fresh to the other. When you have fallen, make an exterior sign and a little act of sorrow, and at night see how many times this has happened, and *record it*. The devil is sure to try and prevent you from doing anything of the sort. Are you going to make it easy work for him ? Or will you make it difficult for him ? We have to carry on our spiritual exercises and defy the devil ; but it is excellent to have the devil fussing about spiritual exercises instead of greater things.

And now about that resolution you are going to make. I want you to have the idea of the resolution clearly in your mind. With each meditation something of a resolution must rise up : it can't be otherwise when we dwell on our Lord's life. Keep these resolutions in your mind, and then, when you come to make your resolution, these will be highly suggestive. You must ultimately draw out the residue, and

I will speak of the methods of election. I want you the next two days to remind yourself that you have come to amend your life and to ask yourself what is wanted ; put it on paper and have it distinctly before you. 1. Ask, Has this come to me from God ? Is it what *He* wants ? Am I doing it from love ? 2. What would you say to another person to whom you could speak with freedom, *i.e.*, with no natural bias whatever, but absolutely impartially ? Supposing such a person in an exactly similar position to yours talking it over with you. You know it may lead to troubles, but you give your recommendation notwithstanding. Take it yourself.

What does your guardian angel think ? He knows all about you. You could not consult a better person. Ask your good angel—have a colloquy with him about your life.

What would you say just before, or rather just after, your death, kneeling at your Saviour's feet and hearing Him recount your life. He will take us through this retreat. You will be present again in it. He will recall how you made the meditations on which your life was to be formed. Did you exert yourself enough to see what resolution you ought to have made ? Did you ask what *I* should say of it now ? Those resolutions of yours—did you take trouble about them ? The whole of our lives will be remembered. The general judgment decides nothing, the particular judgment has done that. The general judgment is to justify God, to show what people's lives have been : everyone will hear and know it all. Men talk against God now ; nobody will talk against Him after the day

of Judgment. What shall I say at the Judgment? What reason shall I give why I did not take those means to reform my life? In all quietness we have to look and see what God wants.

FOURTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE NATIVITY.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The road from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and the cave where our Lord was born.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition that I may find out the Divine Will; that I may know Him better through this meditation, and His love be deeper in my heart; that I may *learn of Him*.

Those around Him reflect His virtues for us. What we see in the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph assists us. Their goodness comes from Him. Our Lord teaches through them. We look to see what He has chosen, what He approves, what those near Him were like. He came to give us instruction in detail for our lives. We are to imitate the life of God on earth.

And first we consider His Birth. Mary and Joseph have been living at Nazareth, but He is not to be born there. And Mary knew it; yet she remains there till there comes some intimation of the Will of God. (And *we* won't wait.) How does this intimation come? The Roman emperor is making a

decree, and through this decree he is unknowingly arranging for the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. A census is to be made. Herod would observe the Jewish rule by which families were to go to their own place. Is not it a good lesson for seeing the Will of God in human things? An irksome law, *e.g.*, legacy-duty to the state in a transfer of property, are we not to see God in such a thing? A petty official comes round and finds Joseph belongs to Bethlehem, and orders him to go there. When we are spoken crossly to, may it not be God's Will, who wishes us to have an opportunity of showing patience? Joseph and Mary leave Nazareth, and are left in darkness as to whether they are to come back. That it was so is clearly intimated, because on their return from Egypt Joseph makes for Bethlehem again until he is told not. If God keeps holy people in such obscurity, why not us? Suspense is the time in which we ought to be most closely united to God—a beautiful time. We don't know what God is going to do next: how foolish to bear it so badly! God is master, and will tell me when the time comes. Oh! I should have managed so much better if I had known! As if God wanted that! Think of the deserted little house at Nazareth that had been honoured by Mary, and where the Son of God was to live. Joseph might have said, If I had only known!

They go to Bethlehem, in order that the Redeemer might be born in *greatest* poverty. At the beginning of His life as at the end He will emphasize His love of poverty. Bethlehem was over-crowded, because it was the city of David. Joseph and Mary both

belonged to that favoured line. All who could claim to belong to that race would be sure to come ; they probably mostly belonged to the richer class. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph have to come some sixty or seventy miles with their ox and ass, the ox carrying some of their household goods. They take four days perhaps making the journey. So they find the town crowded and no room in the inn. St. Joseph goes from door to door seeking hospitality for the Mother of God in vain. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Those who refused to receive strangers refused angels and the God of angels. We must always do our best for God, and wonderful blessings will come. No doubt there were many sympathetic people who were sorry, but there were others who wanted to keep their rooms for some who could pay better. At last St. Joseph comes back to the Blessed Virgin, and tells her this cave, which has served as a stable, is the best shelter he can find ; and they both are pained because they have nothing better to offer the Son of God. But they have spirituality enough to know that He chooses to be an outcast, *knowing Him the better* for this choice of His—*yes, and loving Him the better*—need I say loving Him the better because they are sharers in His poverty.

Let us enter into the spirit of their devotion—their hearts so full of love and expectation. Our blessed Saviour is born in that stable where Joseph had cleared out a little corner. Part of it is taken by the ox and ass, and in the centre is the Lord of glory ! Our blessed Lady wrapping Him in swaddling clothes

and laying Him on the hay, and her heart pouring out acts of adoration, calling Joseph to adore with her, his eyes filled with tears of joy, his heart so proud. What is all the world compared with that cave and the manger and the Child that lies there? He to whom all things belong has come down in search of poverty, and for this He will be born in a stable. Look what He can put in motion to bring about His desire: it teaches us *what God can do to produce His ends*. Look at Mary and Joseph as they kneel and gaze at Jesus. What a sight for their eyes to feed on! His countenance, though that of an Infant, is full of the wisdom of the Father.

He has come to teach us this lesson of humility, and is only recognised by His Mother and foster-father and a few shepherds, the inhabitants of Bethlehem not so much as knowing that He has come. Oh, what a rebuke to all our ordinary judgments! Surely we are getting nearer to see the Will of God when we find Him animated by principles so different from ours! Am I in my proper place in the cave? The shepherds are and the angels; but I—what would they think of me? That question comes very home. My ideas and ways and ambitions—are they unfitting me to be with Him in Bethlehem? or have I so conformed myself to His likeness that I may enter and find myself perfectly at home?

If I had been there first and found the cave, what a hardship I should have thought it to be compelled to spend the night there! See what things our Lord takes possession of. He begins His life in the stable with its discomforts, the cold wind, etc. His Mother

has nothing better to give Him, and here am I shrinking from every little discomfort, and if I am too cold or too hot, I can't say my prayers. And Mary and Joseph are so much at home in the midst of privations and discomforts, because they know such was the will of God. As yet it had not been manifested what He was coming to teach, but how naturally and simply they take it in ! They are entering more into the designs of God, seeing more distinctly what they have got to do, and they act up to their lights. Are we as docile, as ready to learn, as eager to conform ourselves to the Divine Will ?

Shall we ask Mary and Joseph to let us come and kneel there ? He is for you ; His Father gives Him ; He is yours. Learn to love Him and everything that belongs to Him. Do all you can to please Him. He is your God ; praise, revere Him. Day by day become more like Him, and in the love that you have for Him lead your life in imitation of His life.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.30 P. M.]

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

How rapidly we have to pass along ! There will be abundance of matter in our Lord's life for meditation when your retreat is over.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The little holy house. St. Joseph's workshop at a little distance.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition that in this mystery I may get fresh knowledge of my Lord and fresh love of Him.

It is good to select the virtue you propose to imitate, *e.g.*, obedience. I come to learn how to be obedient. After the return from Egypt the Holy Family were directed to Nazareth, and we may suppose they lived in the same house as before, St. Joseph resuming his work. Till He was thirty years of age, our Lord lived at Nazareth : ten-elevenths of His life was spent there in supremest obscurity and humility. If this is not in accordance with our ideas, it is our ideas that want rectifying. Would it have entered into our conceptions that He would have hidden Himself away for thirty years like any other youth, doing work day after day with nothing to show? Why? God did it because we had to be taught. What has He taught us? Our idea is worldly greatness and to be thought much of. God came to teach us humility, and therefore He chose to live in an out-of-the-way village of a despised province, engaged in a despised occupation. He was not idle, yet it was not the life our Lord was leading afterwards when He went about amongst the people, instructing them and working miracles, but a fatiguing life, monotonous and apparently useless. What difference would it have made to the world if the carpenter's work had been less perfectly done? Our Lord associated Himself with Joseph in his work and was subject to Joseph; St. Joseph's word was the word of God, because he was the head of the family, and therefore Jesus and Mary obeyed him. Thus we see

our Lord coming to put Himself under His creatures. He chose the luxury of obedience. He wanted to show how God was to be served, and *He so cared about teaching us to obey that He obeyed His parents for thirty years.* If He had taken His own place, all men on earth should have been guided by Him; He might have dictated to them and have enforced His orders with hosts of angels. But He did not come to subdue the world in this authoritative way. He took God's representative, the head of the family, the simplest form of authority, and him He obeyed in the most perfect manner, and when Joseph died He submitted to His Mother in the same way. Both give an example of what it is to be in a place of authority and how little of self there may be in exercising it. They did it because it was the Will of God, though in some sense it was exquisitely painful to them.

Our Lord then chose this province of Galilee and lived in a poor village, in a poor way, with poor people; the house contained only just what was needful, but it was exquisitely clean: He helped His mother in menial things, doing them under her guidance. She had to point out to Him who was the Wisdom of the Father the way in which they were to be done. Their meals were those of poor persons, well-earned by the labour through which they have passed that day. What a lesson for those who form their ideas from the world and not from Nazareth! Our Lord does boy's errands. He goes to ask St. Joseph's employers whether they wish the work done in this way or that, and is entrusted with the message.

He could have said how it was best to be done. Nothing is more perfect than the life of Jesus or more lovely than those of Mary and Joseph, because they copy Him and become daily more like to Him. The sanctification of those two is being advanced, Mary becoming more holy day by day. Our Lord is delighted to help St. Joseph in his work when He gets old enough ; He lets Joseph show Him how to do it, because he is the head of the family. When Joseph said, "Do it in this manner," there was the sound in the words of the Will of the Eternal Father. Our Lord *learns* carpenter's work in order to teach us all obedience. He had no need to learn it, but He would give us an example of submission and humility. And when Joseph dies and, unlike other saints, has to leave his paradise, the burden falls entirely on Jesus, and He is the carpenter at the beck and call of every one. "My cart is broken down," or, "My plough wants mending," and our Lord does exactly what He is asked—anyone and everyone may employ Him—He is subject to all their defective tempers. People love to find fault, and He bore all their fault-finding without a remonstrance, His obedience goes so deep. They would beat Him down in His price, and complain, and our Lord would have borne it without a murmur. The fact of being paid at all was a humiliation. That He should work for these people was not considered as a condescension. They were so accustomed to think of Him as a mere carpenter that they asked, "How hath this man letters?"

And that was a perfect life in the sight of His

Father! We can't imagine anything more counter to our wishes. What is our refinement compared to His? Was He in a false position? Not at all. His purpose was to teach us and to effect our redemption: the honour paid to His Eternal Father in every action—making a floor or a roof—was of such value, it would have atoned for outrages without number from world after world.

Perfection consists in our fulfilling the Divine Will submissively; and if our Lord could show perfection in that carpentry, we can in the meanest occupations of the day if only we do them as they were done in the Holy House of Nazareth.

FIFTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE THREE DAYS' LOSS.

THE grace we are to ask from this meditation is that of detachment and to bear desolation well. By knowing our Lord we get to know ourselves better. The application to individuals must vary; each has to apply the lesson to herself and ask, What does this mystery say to me? If you study our Lord, the application will come. He goes to fulfil the precept of going to the Temple with Mary and Joseph. *St. Joseph* is simply *bound*—he sets us an example of obedience to precepts. The Blessed Virgin was not bound, the law only applied to men. What is a

precept to them is a counsel to her, and her eager soul accepts the indication of what gives God pleasure. Our Lord was not bound, because He is the lawgiver. There was no imperfection in His staying away. He goes in the spirit of sacrifice, and will make an offering of Himself. Here we have three examples of obedience: it is foolish to say I only do what I am obliged to do.

They start. Let us look at Nazareth. We can't go there too often: let us ask to go in and look round: those walls had witnessed those hallowed years. How bright a spot that has been! We are going to accompany them on their journey—three or four days at least—perhaps five: they cross and re-cross the Jordan. They are *together*: think what that meant! How spiritual their love was, the love which God implants in the heart! In love there must be God, the desire of God; the love that leads to God is an ordinate love. What happiness each one of the Holy Family is conferring on the others! In our intercourse is there an element of self-sacrifice? They would have liked to have kept apart from others, but that would not be charity or perfection. Joseph goes with the men, Mary with the women, and our Lord with one or other or with the children. They look to see how they can benefit the souls of others. Joseph's presence is a benediction, and our Lady is so modest, so quick and handy in doing things for others and doing them so self-forgetingly. Our Lord brings peace and joy to all: every one feels better for a word with Him. When re-united the Three spend their time in more

spiritual converse. Twelve years they have spent together, and Joseph and Mary have learnt to understand Jesus, and now they can talk over things others would not understand—about God. What pleasure they take in spiritual things—their visit to the Temple, the way in which God answers prayer, the homage to be paid Him, the feast, what it all meant—there are plenty of subjects on which to converse! Are we ready to talk about spiritual things, or are we tonguetied with our usual English shame? Is it not too bad we should have nothing to say about God? “Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.” What a tale it tells of our heart!

A great sorrow is coming on Joseph and Mary, but they don't know it. Whenever you feel more devotion than usual, expect that some cross is coming. Regard spiritual favours as preparations for trial. God does not mean them to last but to prepare you for sorrow. Joseph and Mary are full of joy; others perhaps in the company are looking on the festival simply as an outing and a change from their ordinary life. People make such a different use of the same circumstances. How they follow Jesus with their eyes! Oh, what a blessed time! How it imprinted itself on the mind of blessed Mary—that clump of trees, that stream! How each became associated with what her Son had said!

They enter the Temple. There is a great crowd of people—incessant coming and going. They can abstract themselves: they are in God's presence—the Holy of Holies before them—sacrifices going on all day. Look how recollected they are; Mary and

Joseph placing themselves a little behind our Lord with their eyes fixed on Him ;—no shadow of distraction ; they are worshipping God in Him. Watch Him, how He prays, humbling Himself before His Father ; He is taking His proper place among His own creatures. Human nature has to pray. When we pray, do we place Him before us and look at Him ? Imagination is given to us on purpose we may imagine how He prayed, what He looked like. Do we not pray better when before the Blessed Sacrament and when gazing at it in the monstrance at Benediction or Exposition ? The Heart of our Lord is there, lifted up to His Father. Ought we to have any difficulty in our thanksgiving after Holy Communion, His Heart so near to ours ? Oh that we could grasp His acts and aspirations and make ourselves one with Him, appropriating all that belongs to Him, taking the affections of His Heart and making them all our own !

That time in the Temple was one of great consolation for Mary and Joseph. They have to leave the Court, and they are separated from one another in the crowd, and our Lord goes to Solomon's porch, while Mary and Joseph have gone out the way they came, finding towards evening each other, but not Him. Where is He ? They wait and wait in vain. We may suppose it is dark and they cannot see, and they spend their night in sorrow and anxiety and fear—they, the holiest of creatures. None of us are to be strangers to desolation, and they are selected to teach us how to behave. In the morning they go back to the Court, never thinking of penetrating further. He must be with some party or other, and they join the

caravan. "Have you seen Him?" they ask. Who from Nazareth did not know Him? How they would appreciate the loss, and yet how little could they enter into those hearts! That life with Jesus to have come to an end! If it is God's Will to take Him, blessed be the name of the Lord—but "Blessed be the name of the Lord" does not take away the pain. Is He to be theirs no longer? Are they no more to listen to those sweet dear words? And now they have the strength given to them by those consolations in the Temple, a secret strength lying in wait for the day of trouble that has come, and they are bearing it—*those moments of anguish passing in merit all the sunshiny days before.* There is a lesson to be learnt, that comfort must not be sought in creatures—and that when God's Will is hard, it must be made our own by force of arms, if need be.

They consult together, and Joseph says we must stop to-night and return to Jerusalem to-morrow. On the way back Mary says, "Do you remember how He lavished His caresses on me here? He knew what was coming, and I did not know." What a day, when each felt for the other, and Mary in her glorious charity could put Joseph's pain before hers! It was a greater pain still to our Lord. He might have done it so differently, have told them about it, and they would have submitted; but that was not God's way, and it would not have helped us; and when we say "Thy will be done" over and over again, we have not the least idea of what is contained in the petition, and He gives us the grace that when needed we may use it. He did it for their good, knowing what a

difference it would make in the eternity of the blessed Mother of God. He saw their sorrow all the time, and it was a greater pain to Him. Pain is not a bad thing ; it teaches us to lead a life of faith. The only bad thing is sin and separation from God.

Our Lord has been within the precincts of the Temple, and laid Himself down in Solomon's Porch and slept there. Some persons have offered Him food and He accepted it, and then He has gone back to His post at the foot of that column ; and one of the older frequenters of the Temple has asked him if He has lost His parents, and the tone of our Lord's voice affected him, and our Lord has said a word—asked a question perhaps—and it has touched him ; and he says to another, “ This boy has asked me this, and I don't know if I have answered rightly,” and the new-comer enters into conversation with our Lord, and another and another join them, till there is quite a little knot of the best and holiest like Simeon waiting in the Temple. Thus our Lord spends His day, they to whom He is speaking becoming so absorbed they are unconscious of the lapse of time ; our Lord bringing their religion to life and doing it so attractively. Happy souls to be instructed in such a school, to be privileged to listen to the words that fell from those sacred lips !

The third day comes, and He is there still. He knows what the time is to His Mother. From the day He was given to her they had never been parted, and He shares to the full her grief in their separation. The work He was doing was done so beautifully notwithstanding.

At last they find Him, and their desolation is over. But perhaps He is going to teach now, and live with them no longer? That thought comes and causes great pain, and yet they rejoice that God's wisdom is to be spread abroad and so many hearts to be benefited. And He rises and thanks them for—what they will be grateful for every day till they die—their patience and charity. “Son, wherefore hast Thou done so to us?” She must utter those words of loving expostulation—and why not? Where should she take her pain if not to His Sacred Heart? And we—where else shall we go? Oh the mistake of thinking we have to go to others with our burden, when we have the willing Heart of our Lord to lighten it, and at that very time He is taking the worst part and leaving the rest to us, sweetened by His love.

CONFERENCE.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

WORLDLINESS.

I HAVE chosen worldliness as the subject of our conference because I am convinced you will find, in looking at our Lord's life after the first week's exercises, that it will strike you in quite a new light. You may be disposed to ask, “Why do I feel as if I had not known it before?” I believe the answer is,

On account of the world. What are we to do not to have the spirit of the world?

My idea of the world is—that which human beings are apt to think without any reference to God. They have appropriated a little of religion and consider anything more to be fanatical. Theirs is the religion of common sense and contains nothing supernatural. They are educated people who have established their own customs without any reference to God. Their idea of wickedness is quite different from ours. They respect the laws of the land—offences against these are crimes: that is one code. The other code is the understanding of people in the world, and the punishment they inflict is what is called the frown of society. Neither of these are bad, but what they proscribe is on wrong principles, wrong negatively—on the ground of convenience. Some things are blamed out of all proportion. The world has enormous power. Now, as its principle is⁴ to be comfortable in this life, it is at complete variance with the teaching of our Lord. This is at the bottom of the dislike worldly people have to conversions to the Church. It is a hostile power, and as to its leading people to heaven they don't care. We must live as others do, they say, and if we can get to heaven, well and good. We must be as happy as we can. As for death, pray don't think about it. Life is coming to an end: never mind that, we will enjoy it while we can. Religion is a good accessory, nothing else. There was no form of error not tolerated in Pagan Rome—it was only Christianity that was not tolerated. If

we are tolerated here in England, it is because we are weak. The tiger wont lie down with the lamb long : the world will be angry with us ere long, and then we shall be persecuted. Now we are looked on as a poor handful of people who can't do any harm. We have no right to expect more. Our Lord said the world would hate us. We disturb its comfort. Every man in the world lives for himself—his pride is in himself, and he is looking out for himself though he desires to stand well with others. These worldly people scramble with each other, but keep the rules of the game from the same principle always—*comfort*. That principle pervades the life of the world. The object is making money, achieving success in life anyhow, whether in accordance with religion or not. This is directly contrary to our Lord, who tells us we are not to look for success, but to do our best. Such principles as we are going to meditate on they don't understand. To go into a religious order, for example, clashes with worldliness, because it is nothing but the fullest development of the principles of our Lord. It's not an excrescence, but part of the life of the Church. Men and women of the world can't understand it. "Haven't you enough at home—mass, sacraments, duties? What can you want more?"

Charity, *i.e.* loving others for God's sake, is not in the world. There is a substitute for it in civility and good manners. It would not be pleasant if there were no manners, but there may be manners without a bit of charity in them. A gentleman won't hurt your feelings, but directly you have left the room will

make very disparaging remarks ;—" I wonder how she could make herself such a figure," etc. It would create a disturbance and commotion to say things before your face.

As regards *truth*, the biggest sin in the world's eye is a lie, because if we can't trust one another all falls to pieces. If we had the Church and her code, that would bind us. The world only wants a certain sort of truth. What quantities of falsehoods the world tells ! How it delights in uncharitable conversations ! Catholic ladies in this are touched by the spirit of the world. I am glad I have nothing to do with entertaining people at five o'clock. I find myself discussing others dead against *my* principles. *All* may make a resolution about the tongue. Talk of your neighbour as you would wish to be talked about yourself, and *in no other way*.

Do you share in the extreme sensitiveness of the world as regards your own personal greatness ? When you've made a mistake, don't you feel immensely mortified ? How do you feel about your blunders ? When you said something *mal à propos*, did the knowledge that others would think you ill-bred weigh upon you ? Which do you mind most—offending God or the laws of society ? a sin or a mistake—which would you rather commit ? You made a fool of yourself—look at the enormous pains you took to set it right : is not that the world all over ? Every one in the world sets himself up as perfection. *Are* we less possessed with this feeling than they ? How do we take a humiliation, snubbing, reproof, want of respect ? Our religion would teach

us to mint money, to turn all this to gold, but what *do* we do? Anything that makes us ridiculous is a very hard thing to bear: that's why I suppose people can't bear to be out of the fashion, and it comes from worldliness. I am not advocating dowdiness—that's not my affair, but *worldliness* is—and the amount we spend in dress has to be settled before God. We can't make people think well of the Catholic religion by being as worldly as they are and adopting their principles. We can't make the Church different from what she is, and worldliness will be our Lord's enemy to the end of time. At least spare those detestable scents. Don't carry the smell of the world in your flounces.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE TWO STANDARDS.

WE have to ask in this meditation that we may understand the wiles and cunning of the enemy of our souls, so as to beware of and avoid them.

Represent to yourself Lucifer seated on a high throne on the plain of Babylon. If we could see sin, we should know how horrible it is, but it presents itself to us attractively. The devil makes out that he would give us happiness. He comes pretending to be what he is not, that we may accept him and do his will. In this world he is hidden.

Fire and smoke conceal him. If we could go through life without being blinded by fire and the smoke and confusion it brings, there would be no danger. We shall be out in the light if we are wise, and clear away all those concealments behind which the devil can lurk. We must be wise. No deception of the devil should take us in. He comes and palliates; we oughtn't to be so foolish as to be deceived. He assembles his followers as a tyrant, and sends them forth as his emissaries. Think what it is for him to be misleading souls. Is it not sad to think of those fallen angels doing everything to win souls, so that they may be miserable for ever? Lucifer sends them out; there is to be no place to which they will not go, no soul they will not attack. God checks them. He permits them to tempt, but only up to a certain point. We are never tried beyond our grace. We are not to be astonished at temptation. A quiet time is dangerous; the fact of being without temptation is not to make us secure. A time of temptation is the safest. We are *bound* to pray in times of temptation. Some people are so taken by surprise that they don't know what to do. No place is exempt from temptation. Devils can get in anywhere, and in the holiest place continue to tempt us. Out of temptation we are to get good; we are to be driven into God's arms. It is an immense advantage to have been tempted and to have overcome. God has taken care that temptation shall not be so bad that we shall be unable to resist it. Plenty of people in the world are doing the devil's work, causing souls to fall which perhaps

those devils could not get at with an appropriate temptation. What an awful thing to think we may be injuring souls and enlisted in the devil's army!

What is the policy of the devil? He directs his emissaries to go into the world and tempt people to the love of riches, the vain love of honours, and then they will become proud—and there is no sin into which a proud person may not fall. Riches, self-enjoyment, using creatures for their own sake, stopping there, making an idol of them, aiming at self-aggrandisement, at being always well thought of by everybody—all this leads most naturally to pride and an inordinate sense of our own excellence. To attribute good to ourselves is to prevent it, setting ourselves against Almighty God. There is pride in every sin. To sin is practically to say, "I know as well as God. I intend to choose my own way."

Love of riches then leads to love of honour, and then comes pride, and with pride all manner of evil. The devil tells his emissaries they have only to look to the riches and honours—the rest will follow—the pride will come. When we begin to love praise inordinate y, we are living for ourselves, not for God. We asked for grace to see the deceptions of the devil: in themselves riches and honours are not bad. God sends them, they are innocent in themselves, but giving ourselves up to them makes them inordinate. Thus, as regards my good name, I have to maintain it in the world *for God*, and to win souls to Him; but if I care about my good name *for its own sake*, I am on the way to ruin.

Now we must turn to our Lord, and see Him

standing on the green grass near Jerusalem, calling His followers, a few fishermen, a tax-gatherer, Nathaniel from under the fig-tree, a traitor. He collects but a few at a time—not many wise, not many learned. Those weapons that we should have taken for granted would be most successful, are not employed. Are we to be surprised at these scientific men turning against the Church? Not that our Lord has had no great minds amongst His followers—think of Paul and Justin, Augustine and Thomas of Aquin—but not many learned, not many wise. *Some*, but few comparatively.

Now why is this? Our Lord, with a handful of mostly poor followers, is going to have the glory of the victory Himself. Those who join Him do so to their own benefit, in that they are forwarding what He has to do in gaining souls, etc. But He does love to employ them. He gathered together some five hundred. Was it much of a show for the work of the Son of God upon earth? But since His death there are multitudes of martyrs and confessors and edifying people, who have purchased by their lives the doctrine He taught, in order that the glory may be attributed to Him. They forgot themselves and thought only of Him, and the privilege of being employed in His work; and in that spirit we must undertake it. We must beg Him to allow us to help Him, always referring everything to Him. Shall there be less obedience, less fervour and zeal amongst the followers of Christ, than are to be found amongst His enemies, who are trying to overthrow His kingdom? We have our Lord's directions.

“Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” O Lord, I should like to be humble—but I am not humble—what am I to do? It is very simple: poverty of spirit comes from love of humiliations and detachment. Get rid of your selfishness; detachment leads very quickly to love of humiliations as a means of gaining humility, and humility leads to every virtue. That is the way in which we are to save our souls. That poverty of spirit! Have I been aiming at it? “Blessed are the poor *in spirit*,” is the first thing He taught that multitude. I am within easy reach of the means of perfection; knowing the weakness of my own nature I must *be glad of humiliation*, instead of being discontented and unhappy about it. But I want to have my own way, devil-fashion, and come out triumphant as Christ’s follower in heaven. This cannot be. You must go to heaven by detachment from creatures; if you want humility, you must be detached, and practise and accept humiliations for the sake of being like Christ our Lord. There is no other way to humility but through humiliations. Do you propose to do without humility?

See what our Lord means when He says, “Learn of me.” If we have not that detachment, we must get more humiliations. Be quite sure humiliation does bring you humility. What is the use of being under Christ’s standard, if we are not trying to be like Him? Is there any way but humility? Are we to be so foolish as to say, “Oh! that is more than I can bear”?

FIFTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON THREE CLASSES OF MEN.

THE object of this meditation is to find out whether we are sincere. We have been asking our blessed Lord that we may imitate Him ; we have been studying Him, and in the two standards we saw Him in His meekness inviting us to be like Him. We offered ourselves to Him and said we wanted humiliations, as that was the only way of getting to heaven. We begged at any price that He would make us like Him ; it won't do for us to draw back and say it hurts. Did I mean it when I said I would beg for no exemptions, that I wished to be by His side in the battle, that I desired to be like Him in the virtues of detachment, obedience, mortification, poverty of spirit, etc. ? *Did I mean it ?* This meditation is a test.

Gaze up to heaven—see the majesty of God reigning there surrounded by His angels and saints. I will choose to be what He wants me to be.

St. Ignatius puts before us three classes of people, and each of the people in these classes has had a sum of money given him which he has received without consulting God. He ought to have said, Does God want me to have this money ? Shall I serve Him best with or without it ?

They have taken possession of the money without consulting God, and they feel uneasy and that it is a burden. If God intended you to have money, and you hold it as a steward, then it is not a burden. It ought to be a real burden where you have not consulted God. These people want to be rid of the *burden* (not of the *money*); they want to get their conscience easy. The first class of people say, "I want to get rid of the burden, of course; but at the same time *I want my ducats*. I don't see what I can do." These people want to please themselves, not God. It's not a question of sins; the question is, What is *most pleasing to God*? They won't give up their ducats because they want to please themselves. God wants them to set their conscience at rest. No, they won't, because they *intend* to keep their money.

The second class has this in common with the first—those belonging to it want to get rid of the weight, and they think to do so by deciding that God shall have anything He wants except this. They say, "I will do no end of good with it. I will get the best advice possible as to how I shall spend it." It looks a large thing to say God shall have everything except one. What if it is that very one that God wants? He is to conform His Will to theirs, and then they will be admirable. This class will never be happy, even if all the money were to be spent on the poor. Do *we* never try to make God agree to what we want? We should never ask for temporal favours except with the condition, "Not my will but Thine!" We should ask that God's Will may be done whether we like it or not. These people are not doing this. They are

resolved to keep their money. Are they in a rightful position ?

The third class comes to God, and says, "I made a mistake in taking the ducats without asking. I will give them up at once if you wish it. I will treat them as if I had not got them, and find out first whether God wants me to have them." The plan of these people is to detach themselves at once, not to look at the ducats, but to pray sincerely for light as to God's Will. The same is just as applicable to honours : —I have an opportunity offered in which my talents will be recognised, I must consult God first without being biassed by my likes and dislikes. There is nothing to which this meditation is not applicable : *e.g.*, *impatience* comes from attachment to your own ways ; *sloth* from love of your own ease, which prevents you from doing the things you know you ought to do.

If you do nothing, you are in the first class. If you do everything else but not that thing you know God wants, you are in the second.

St. Ignatius adds a "golden rule." He says, if you find the adhesion of your will to these ducats very strong, go a step further and say, "Now that I have taken them and feel an attachment to them, won't your Divine majesty take them away ?" It does not follow that He will do so, but if He does I shan't have to make an act of patience, but an act of thanksgiving. So when you see your bag of ducats disappearing, you have to say, "I *am* so thankful they are gone."

SIXTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE TEMPTATIONS OF OUR LORD.

THIS is the day on which resolutions are to be made. Ask yourself, "What has God been asking me for? What does He plead for? What am I to set right before dying?" We can have nothing higher in our Lord's life put before us than what we have already been considering.

FIRST PRELUDE.—This morning we are to meditate on the temptations of our Lord. In the first prelude we are to see that place on the side of the mountain where our Lord was tempted, where He fasted and the devil found Him.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition that I may know Him more intimately in His temptations, and love Him better for His going through them out of love for me, that I may devote myself afresh to His service and win in my fight.

FIRST POINT.—Our Lord has parted from His blessed Mother. He had spent thirty years in preparation for His work, knowing how we grudge preparation. See how much more work can be done when it is prepared. It is a great mortification to Himself and His mother to part. When it is the Will of His Father that they should part, they part, but not without

pain. There often *is* pain in fulfilling our Father's Will. She remains in her solitude and He begins His work. And how does He begin it? By going through the baptism of penance. How He lowers Himself! St. John the Baptist recognises Him, and our Lord has to insist on being baptised by him. What a perfect act of humility!

When the Voice from heaven came, "This is My beloved Son," we should have said, "Now is the moment to begin." But instead of beginning His public life, our Lord goes away and ascends the mountain for a long retreat of forty days. He has made no provision for His earthly wants. While that long prayer lasts, it absorbs Him. How little we think of prayer as a preparation for what we have to do! What a difference would it make if we began with having God on our side and the fulfilment of His Will our object!

The time comes when our Lord's prayer is to end, and now He feels a sense of hunger. The devil has been watching (God has not permitted him to know about the divinity of Jesus Christ), and he takes his opportunity. That he should choose this moment, after the long prayer that succeeded our Lord's baptism of penance, is a sign of how the devil chooses his seasons. We must not be surprised at temptation coming just after retreat. The devil wants to prevent the benefit of retreat. Just when God has been best to us, then we are most liable to fall. He takes up a stone that looks like bread and says, "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that this stone be made bread." He puts it conditionally. There would have

been no sin in our Lord if He had done it ; it would be doing wrong to no one ; but He would not do it because His miraculous power was never to be exercised for Himself. Why ? Because it was His Father's Will. How completely He puts Himself on our level ! And therefore His answer comes, " Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." All through these temptations He has recourse to first principles. In our temptations it is no out-of-the-way thing we have to search for : we have only to refer everything back to God ;—not merely to ask, Is it a sin ? but, Is it in accordance with the Will of God ? Throughout the three temptations our Lord is suffering from acute hunger. That peculiar kind of union with His Father which prevented Him from feeling hunger is withdrawn, and His hunger is augmented by the temptations to which He has been subjected. The devil always tries to take us at a disadvantage, and we may be sure this is taken into account by God and that He gives us the necessary strength.

SECOND. The devil then carries our Lord away through the air. Think what the presence of His enemy, His great rival, must have been—the enemy of the Eternal Father doing all he can to rob Him of souls—how odious ! and especially that the devil should take Him in his arms. *He endured this for us.* Think of what it suggests to us. Christ our Lord went through it for us—therefore we are not to be surprised when the devil comes near us. We must fly to our Saviour and not use our self-command. We have got to fight, and when the victory is won it will

be part of His victory. "Cast Thyself down," said the devil, "for it is written that He hath given His angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy feet against a stone." The promise was true; He had a right to appeal to it, but the devil's application is a misleading one always, and it is his perversion of the truth that deceives so many. The temptation was that our Lord was going to begin His teaching. Why not make a start? Cast yourself down: think what an efficacious sermon that will be. What was our Lord's answer? "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Tempting God's power is to expect Him to show it when we have no need.

THIRD. Foiled once more, the devil took Him into a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, "All these I will give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." I will abdicate in your favour, I will make way for you. Why should you go about preaching? Why should you suffer and die? I will give it to you if you will worship me. The devil ends by an insult and suggesting a temptation of pride. The first temptation was *of riches*—enjoyment more or less sensual though lawful; secondly, *of honours*, how all would honour Him if they could say, "We saw the Messiah descend from a pinnacle of the Temple!"—then *of pride*. Look how the order of these temptations follows what St. Ignatius told us in the two standards. This temptation is to independence of God. Jesus Christ has come down to be the King, the Ruler, the Legislator, but to be so, as He is

man, independently of God would be an act of pride. No act is good independently of Him. All has to be as God chooses. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." St. Ignatius might have taken the foundation for his Exercises from these words. The Sacred Humanity was made for that adoration and service. We are always safe if we keep to first principles, in controversy especially. The devil's work is carried on under a sort of smoke and confusion ; he can't deceive us when we keep to first principles. See then what an amount of light these temptations throw. Meditate on His life. Never let Him out of your sight. Try to be always getting to know Him more. See what you have got to say to Him as to the simple way in which you are going to meet temptation—how He has left that for you to help Him. He is to win the victory *in* you. Promise that you will have recourse to Him and never meet His enemy without calling to Him. Fight your battle without Him and you are lost ; call Him to your assistance, and *how can you ever fail to win ?*

C O N F E R E N C E .

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

A WORD about your resolutions. They should be few, but they should come home. God has wanted something from you, perhaps, that you have hitherto been unwilling to give Him. Give it Him now. We hardly ought to require *reminding* that our spiritual duties must be set in order—that goes without saying; of course that must be done—and then make some resolution with other resolutions perhaps to support that one.

To those who do not belong to the Apostleship of Prayer I would recommend that devotion. It shows us how to offer our actions. There is another devotion I wish to mention—the Heroic Act for the souls in Purgatory. Don't make it without thinking about it. It must be a personal act—not done on the recommendation of another.

In the meditation on the Temptation, I omitted to show the superb contempt with which our Lord treated the devil. It's not by making a fuss about temptations that the devil is to be met, but by poor weak creatures like us despising him. He can bark

but not bite. He can't injure us if we treat him properly. We must be united with our Lord and not trouble ourselves about the devil. There is no reason to mention temptations in confession unless you want guidance ; if you are in doubt whether you consented, mention the doubt as a doubt. The less you go back upon it the better.

We are going to consider the three degrees of humility—the last of which is the climax of perfection—and it will be excellent if we can sometimes make acts of it.

The first degree is, that not for anything would I deliberate whether I should commit a mortal sin. We must always be in that state, else we forfeit our souls.

In the second degree, I so submit myself to His Divine Majesty that for nothing in the world would I deliberate about committing a venial sin. We *can* keep ourselves from all *deliberate* venial sin. We can't reckon on being free from venial sins of frailty, being taken by surprise. We can't tell what temptation may come, and how soon : it will probably come very soon. The devil will try it. Even if we do fall, the subsequent dejection comes from the devil, and we must not give way to it. In this second degree we have arrived at that indifference spoken of in the foundation of the Exercises. If I am not indifferent about my good name and I can save it by telling a lie, I shall do it. This state of indifference is very far from being easy, and therefore, if we only attain to this, it will be a great thing. The people with the ducats took possession of them without consulting God, because they

were not indifferent. If we practise this indifference we shall have gained a great deal.

Don't suppose you can make a jump from the first to the third degree. You can't. You must go steadily to work and get into the second. Is it wise to put a higher degree before us? Well, we need not settle that we are going to get into it at once. It is very salutary to see what perfection is and the heights there are above us. The third degree consists then in this—that where all the rest is good we choose that which makes us most like our Lord, especially in poverty, contempt and humiliation. Where I have a choice as to poverty, I wish to be poor because Christ was poor. The vast majority have not any choice; they have to live in a certain way, but all that is external. It is quite *possible* to live in a well-furnished house and to be poor in spirit. “Oh! I should like that,” some may say. But I tell you it is *much more difficult* and will require a continual effort. You *must* be poor in spirit. I can't help the difficulty. Poverty consists in not attaching yourself to these things. If you had your jewels stolen or anything taken from you that you like, should you mind? If it were somebody else's property, you would be uncommonly cool. There is no use in saying to our Lord, “I want to be poor in spirit,” when you have no intention of being so. The real test of detachment is how you take the loss of your possessions whatever they may be.

Then as regards the service of other people. How *dependent* some are on others. They can do nothing for themselves. It looks as if England were divided into the people who work and those who are worked

for. Save people trouble if you can. Who am I that I should throw the burden of my life on others? Our Lord took upon Him the form of a servant; He was at people's beck and call. I think there are some who are detached from possessions, but who live a life of ease. Try to mortify your love of comfort. "All is vanity but a carriage," St. Philip Neri said. Anyone in Rome knows the meaning of that. Why not sometimes make a sacrifice of your love of ease? Why take a cab when you can go on foot or in an omnibus? Don't do it out of economy but from the spirit of poverty.

Respectable people have been sometimes defined as those who keep a gig. Is that anything to be respected for? It is a pure accident that they are well off. The people who aim at becoming rich wish to stand well with their fellow-men. The interior spirit should be different. I don't want to break down social distinctions, but our aim should be God's Will in all. We can't afford, most of us, to sacrifice our reputation, but we are not to love it for its own sake: and we must be ready to part with it if God chooses, saying, "What a chance this is for me; it comes from God's hands, and I'll take it willingly."

Is there anything we can do occasionally to keep ourselves safe in the second degree of humility by aiming at the third? We know how full the world is of pains. People have a blow and have got to bear it: they manage to keep a cheerful countenance notwithstanding. We meet these blows—now how shall we take them?—as, for example, the deliberate preference of some one else? Well, if I am postponed

to another I'll take it well, and not only that, I will do things in order that I may be put second. I will use my powers of conversation only when charity requires it. Why should we not be quite quiet till we are wanted? Let your friend talk if he wants it. The less you say, the better people will think you talk. Take the trouble to suggest something interesting for them to talk about, and let them have the credit of it. It is a mortification if it's just your subject on which you talk so well—but why not? There is no harm in a mortification. Discussions, how quickly they change into fights for victory! Is it right to be discussing just for victory?

In various little ways such as these we may practise the third degree of humility. Give up defending yourself and see what would happen. You will make mistakes, and people will think how little you know. Is there any harm in that?

Try always to give others the better parts, and look to see not what is the *least* I can do for my neighbour, but what is the *most*—and that not for the pleasant but for the unpleasant—for a person who is very unattractive and repays you very badly. Our life is to be as like our Lord's life as possible, so we must go constantly against self in imitation of Him who *pleased not Himself*. Whatever happens, this is what I am going to live for, to try and become as like Him as I can.

SIXTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE FEEDING OF THE MULTITUDE, AND OUR LORD
WALKING ON THE WATERS.

As a specimen of our dear Redeemer's life, we will take that day and night which included the feeding of the multitude and the walking on the waters. For a composition of place, we will look at that dear lake of Genesareth, and imagine our Lord there surrounded by His Apostles and the crowds coming.

Pray for a clearer knowledge of our Lord and a closer imitation of Him.

This day followed immediately on the Apostles' return from that little mission on which our Lord had sent them, when they found Him at Capharnaum. They came back tired. Our Lord was tired too. He had been hard at work satisfying the people's desires. He had not had the help of His disciples with the crowd, and it was very hard work: there was scarcely time to eat bread. Our Lord proposes they should go and rest: the next day there would be a change of work, of absolute idleness none at all. They go to rest very early no doubt.

Before sunrise they start. We see them coming down to the beach, bringing oars, sails, a basket with some loaves, etc., the water very calm and beautifully

clear. They get in and push out, and our Lord sits down—Peter at the helm ; and they pull out into the lake, which is perfectly quiet, and they rest on their oars ; and our Lord says how glad He is to have them back. He is always so grateful, and they tell their little anecdotes about their mission, and how they carried out His orders, and He encourages and instructs them, they being so happy about it all. “ And, Master, the very devils are subject to us in Thy name.”

Think how they felt ; and our Lord sees there is some little danger and gives them a warning about pride—they taking it in such a filial way—all except one. And now the sun begins to rise, and the rays slant over the water, and the mountains cast their shadows, and the people begin to come out and look for our Lord and find He is gone ; and then they see Him in the boat on the lake. And the disciples in the boat perceive the people collecting, and know they will have work to do in the course of the day ; and they bring out their loaves and eat. And then they go on and come to a charming little bay, with rich grass and flowers, just the place to entertain the multitude. Our Lord chose it Himself. And there the people begin to assemble, and the disciples arrange them and put them where they can hear, and our Lord begins to talk to them out of the boat, St. Peter standing in the water and looking up to our Lord, and John not far off, looking at each other occasionally. This is their holiday. What a thing to have pleasures like this ! How they enjoy hearing Him teach ! how they treasure up every word ! the

very sound of His voice is such music to them. Then, when they have been "taught," the disciples go amongst the crowd of people and find out just what each one wants, and our Lord hears them all, and gives them what they need ; and now it is getting late, and the disciples want Him to dismiss them, that they may go and get something to eat : for these people had only meant to go to Capharnaum, and have no food with them. But our Lord said, "Give you them to eat," and the disciples ask, "How? They have but five loaves and two fishes, what are they among so many?" He says, "Make them sit down." There on the two sides of the valley they sit down, so arranged that they can be counted very quickly, and there are five thousand. They are all full of wonder, not knowing what is going to happen ; and they see our Lord lifting His eyes to heaven, and laying His hands on the food ; and He takes a loaf and breaks it in two ; then He takes the other half and breaks and breaks and gives the bread to Peter ; and Peter's arms are quite full, and he carries it to that company, and it goes on multiplying. And meanwhile our Lord is giving bread to St. Andrew, and so on with the others, and He sends the fishes round in like manner ; and all are abundantly provided for, and are looking with such gratitude on our Lord. Then the disciples come and say they have all had enough, and our Lord tells them to gather up the fragments, and they help themselves ; weary and tired they are, but light-hearted and joyous. Then He desires them to get into the boat, in spite of their remonstrances. He

knows a trial is coming from which He would spare them, that of worldly greatness. They don't know why they are sent away; they do love him so. Almost immediately after they have gone, the people who have been talking together, say, "This is the Christ; we will make Him our King;" and the cry rises louder and louder, "Our King! our King!" Our Lord speaks to them and pacifies them. He tells them how He will help them in all their needs, their sicknesses of soul and body; but He will have no earthly greatness. He insists upon it and dismisses them; and so they have to leave Him and go on their various ways, and then, alone, He begins to ascend the mountain. He loves the mountain-top; there He can be in solitude with His Father. He composes Himself in prayer; He prays for each of His Apostles; there are acts of love in His heart for each one. He sees the companies He has fed, those for whom He has worked miracles—the lame walking, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the paralytic and the lepers made whole. He reads their grateful hearts, He knows the wants of each, and to each He sends the grace needed. He looks out over the land, and sees poor Jerusalem and His brethren so estranged from Him. How He yearns for them, and longs that they should be reconciled to Him! Further still, He looks over the world, the great Roman Empire, China, Japan. He sees all the members of the human race; His heart is large enough to take them all in, and as eager to satisfy each one as He was to feed that multitude who have just left Him. He saw *me*, my great necessities,

my struggles and infidelities, my need of grace. He offered a prayer sufficient for me ; He lifts His heart to His Eternal Father, and makes the sacrifice of Himself for each one, giving His Blood for the strengthening of each. A worthy act of worship ascends to Heaven, and God the Father looks down and is satisfied ; our Redeemer has offered it, and our puny prayers can be united to His.

The weather has changed meanwhile. A storm has gathered over the lake. He must think of those Apostles who have been labouring on the rough waters ; He descends the mountain and comes down to the lake composedly, as though He had been resting, as indeed He has. The waves are rushing into the little bay. He puts His foot on the water, and it bears Him up—the Lord who made it ! He walks forth in the darkness of the night and He comes near the boat, and when the disciples see Him, fear takes possession of them till they hear His voice, “It is I, be not afraid.” Then St. Peter calls to Him : “Lord, if it be Thou, suffer me to come to Thee on the water.” That eager heart could not bear to be so near and not go to Him. And our Lord says, “Come,” and Peter at once goes. But afterwards, “Seeing the wind strong, he was afraid.” As long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus, he could walk on the water, but now he looks at the waves and begins to sink, and he cries out, “Lord, save me.” And in an instant our Lord is by his side, taking hold of him and saying, “O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt ?” And they get into the boat, and in an instant the storm is calmed.

No more labour for them now on that fitful inland sea! By a word He causes them to be in port: once more their feet are on the beach. How safe they feel in His company! and oh, what lessons they have taken in during those four-and-twenty hours!

SIXTH DAY.

[8.30 P. M.]

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

I FEEL inclined to go on still with the life of our Lord. For our composition of place let us imagine that solitary hill on which the Transfiguration took place. We will go up there and be present at it.

We will ask to understand our Lord as He is preparing Himself for His Passion, that we may aim at carrying out in our own lives His teaching.

After a day of the usual ordinary work He took three of His disciples to Mount Thabor. How happy they are! Generally He goes alone. That separation has often been a grievance to them. Now Peter, the chief, and those two dear sons of Zebedee are accompanying Him and are going to share His prayer. It is a long walk for weary men. It is the getting nearer heaven that makes the wearisome way of this world tolerable. Our Lord's thoughts are getting more absorbed in the prayer He is about to make, and a sense of solemnity comes over them.

They get to the table-land at the top, and they begin to pray. Something in the night moves them, and they pray on regardless of the lapse of time ; but He is thinking of them and says, "Now take your rest, and repose for to-morrow's work." He bids them go to sleep. A night will come when they will be heavy with sleep, and He would have liked them to watch ! They are soon asleep in the quiet sleep that brings strength for work. They don't know the Bridegroom is so soon to be taken from them.

He continues His prayer, and the glory that was His own begins to show itself. And He was lifted up, and His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as snow ; and there appeared with Him Moses the law-giver and Elias the prophet. The brightness of the light arouses the three. They were to be the testimonies to all time of His glory. If He had shown it, the world could not have borne it, His Father's Will could not have been done, His death could not have taken place. They see His brightness and His two companions, and hear the conversation that is passing. Those two have come to pay Him homage and to hold communion with Him and offer Him their gratitude, and our Lord in the midst of this glory is talking about His death. We should have imagined His conversation would have been about heaven. Not only while He is in the midst of the people He is to redeem, but here in glory with two celestial visitants our Lord talks about His death, which is so soon to take place. What must it have been to them to have these great events unveiled to them ! Our Lord is incomparably

greater as our Redeemer than as our Creator. The lesson He teaches here is, "In consolation prepare yourself for desolation : in desolation look back on consolation."

During His Passion He was in desolation, weighed down with the sense of being abandoned by His Father. We have to strengthen ourselves for desolation when it comes. It is not for us to choose. He sends consolation that we may learn how sweet He is. It is well we should learn these rules. When the retreat is over, we may have desolation very soon ; we are not to be surprised if this is the case. Let me accept whatever comes as coming from the hands of my loving Saviour. There is nothing that I can long for except to belong to Him.

"And there came a cloud and overshadowed them ; and they were afraid when they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying : 'This is my beloved Son, hear Him.' " That voice from heaven ! Three poor fishermen were there to hear it, and it has gone on echoing ever since. "This voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount," St. Peter tells us. "They were very much afraid," and our Lord came to be their comforter. He touched them and said, "Arise and fear not ;" and they see no one but only Him, showing no longer that preternatural glory. The vision of that majesty which belongs to Him has been withdrawn ; but He is with them still.

Will not the time come when He will put me to rest, and I shall wake up and see His face shining as the sun and His raiment brilliantly white ? That

which was the momentary privilege of His three Apostles, preparing them for the Agony in Gethsemane, shall be the familiar sight we shall see through the endless ages of eternity. Oh, then, let us rejoice to be with Him now in poverty, to be like Him in suffering and humiliation, to be near Him in His agony, so that the day may come when the veil shall be withdrawn and we may receive strength to see the face of our Beloved through the rays of glory that fall from Him, and indicate to the inhabitants of heaven the majesty of their Redeemer !

SEVENTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY.

IN making meditation on any subject we may take in the Passion also, as our Lord always had the Passion before His eyes even in His infancy.

Before passing on to the Passion we will make another preliminary meditation, taking for our subject the Supper at Bethany. The Passion was close at hand : our Lord knew exactly what was coming on Him.

FIRST PRELUDE.—We look at that room in Bethany where our Lord is sitting with Simon and the others.

SECOND PRELUDE.—We are to pray that we may know our Lord better. This story is recorded on

purpose that we may know Him better and lead that life henceforward that He wants us to lead.

It is impossible to separate this from another meal, where St. Mary Magdalene was present, but here St. Martha is too. Simon is called a Pharisee, also a leper : it seems probable that he had been cured. In all probability he was a relation of the family of Lazarus, which would account for Martha's serving, and would make Magdalene's conversion harder if she owned her sin before relations ; and also this Simon was a Pharisee. In the first instance Simon was quite unconverted ; he thought of our Lord as a new doctor, whom he would patronise, and to whom he would give a start. We see the earnestness of Magdalene ; human respect has been driven out of her. Our Lord has given public instructions, and her heart has been touched, and she has come to find him. She makes her way into Simon's house and receives the scorn of all. Silence falls on them ; there is something in her look they don't like. She makes her way to where our Lord's feet are, to offer Him those courtesies which Simon has neglected. Simon thinks he has made a mistake : if this Man were a prophet, He would not let this sinner come near Him and allow her tears to fall on His feet. Her heart has been drawn to Jesus. She knows she can find forgiveness from Him as she kneels and kisses His sacred feet. At last He speaks and answers what was in Simon's mind. "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee." "Master, say it." There is something very supercilious in Simon's answer, and then our Lord begins with a little parable. Simon thinks there is a problem

to be solved, a case proposed for discussion, and therefore he listens to the story of the creditors, and when the question comes, "Which of the two loveth him most?" he thinks it a simple question and still answers superciliously. He has very little thought that he is to be called to judgment, and that that woman whom he despises is to be preferred to him: all his learned good life spoilt by pride. I accept from Magdalene, our Lord says, what you have refused me—the ordinary hospitalities of Jewish life. Which loves me most? Simon had led a respectable life;—not so Magdalene, but she has found her Redeemer, and her heart is completely changed. "And He said to her, Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . thy faith hath made thee safe. Go in peace." Her humility makes her do exactly what He tells her—*Go*,—and she will be rewarded for her obedience with hours at those sacred feet.

Now turn to the supper at Bethany. People came in to see Lazarus, who had been dead. They were there when he died and was buried; and they were standing by when they heard the wonderful words, "Lazarus, come forth!" Simon had our Lord on one side, Lazarus on the other, and Martha served. Magdalene enters just as she had entered three years before, with the box of spikenard in her hands; and she kneels down, her memory full of the tenderness with which she had been received, when men would have spurned her, and the Sacred Heart welcomed her. Her sorrow is not less deep because she loves more and knows Him better. Let us learn that He is not asking that we should be immaculate, but He

is asking that we should be contrite. The love which was strengthened by all those long hours that Magdalene had sat at His feet—all that great love comes pouring out upon Him now ; and because she so loves, she weeps : and now she does that which she had not dared to do before, and she pours the ointment on His head, and breaks the vessel that contained it, so that He may receive every drop, and that that may never be employed for any other which she had used for Him. Lazarus and Martha have always been good, she thinks, but it is not so with me. He has not come for the just, but for sinners, and she is not ashamed to recall what she has done, because He has rescued her. Her heart is full of intensest gratitude that He should have saved such as her. She had been forgiven much, therefore she loved much. She proved her love at the foot of the cross, at the sepulchre on Easter morning ; and now in Heaven she is at His feet and that for all eternity. None so welcome to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the woman who was not ashamed to acknowledge herself a sinner !

The first ointment was given from her luxuries ; *now* she intentionally brings precious ointment ; after His death she will again bring it, and be still holding it when He speaks to her.

Now at Bethany she will pour it all out, and it ought to be sweet to them all. Instead, there is that grudging spirit of Judas. “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor ?” Not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and kept the purse, and so he

begrudges our Lord the gift of Magdalene. Why! that ointment was made for God, to help Magdalene to praise and reverence and serve Him; and the others are influenced by the words of Judas, though *they* are really thinking of the poor. And our Lord says, "The poor you have always with you, but me you have not always." Why! the poor are to be loved for His sake: it is not for philanthropy only that they are to be loved, but for Him, and surely we are to love Him who is poor.

"She hath done it for My burial." The loving heart of Magdalene has done all she could, and this is the reward: "For My burial." O poor Magdalene! to hear He is to die and be buried—to hear that what she has done is for His burial! How deeply grieved she is to learn the end is so near! We may be certain that in those colloquies with her Lord, she must have heard and understood what He was to do, and therefore all that was to precede His death; and this is the reward bestowed on Magdalene for her love. Our Lord came to bestow happiness, but happiness through the cross, and the more we love Him the more we are to share in His Passion and suffering.

"Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her!"

A memorial of her! Oh, what a canonization! The glory of the name of Mary Magdalene should never fade. All the world should hear the story told, that hearts might have the grace to love and to show their love as did Mary Magdalene.

SEVENTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

INSTEAD of a conference I will give now another meditation, and it shall be on the institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

Our Lord and His disciples had come from Bethany to Jerusalem. He sends Peter and John to prepare a place where they may celebrate the Pasch. They are to go to the gate of Siloam and find a man carrying a pitcher of water. Our Lord is going to select a man for so great an honour as that of receiving Him, and of providing a room where the Blessed Sacrament should be instituted, and where He would appear on Easter-day, and where Mary and the Apostles should be assembled when the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost. Our Lord is intending to honour this man, and he is not even known to the Apostles by name. What an amount of secret fidelity there may be! What an idea it gives us of the workings of grace! We know nothing about what is going on in the hearts of our neighbours. Let us take a bright view of what God does for souls. A charitable judgment is by far the safest.

At the time of the Pasch in Jerusalem, rooms were

prepared for strangers in the upper part of the houses. Peter and John have only to say: "*The Master saith*: Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the Pasch with My disciples?" and this man is quite certain to give it. Is it not a fine disposition to be in, to be ready to give God what He wants at once—to hold everything so loosely that we give it willingly, even if we care for it most?

The custom was that the head of the family bought the lamb and took it to the priests. Our Lord was the head. He sends Peter in His place. The master of the house is delighted to hear our Lord is coming. John stays by himself to put everything ready, while Peter goes for the lamb. Think of John preparing everything. What a quantity of love we may put into a pure intention! It is the fourth time they eat the Pasch together. By-and-by our Lord and the others come, leaving Gethsemane on the left, the brook Cedron running parallel. Our Lord knows the house, they do not. The master of the house deems our Lord's choice of his house is the greatest favour that could have been bestowed on him. He and Peter and James take our Lord upstairs. This is Thursday—"the day before He suffered." The next thing is the celebration of the Pasch, an exceedingly simple ceremony. No bone of the lamb was to be broken; it was fastened to two bits of wood in the shape of a cross, and eaten with herbs and unleavened bread, wine and water. Our Lord goes through the ceremonies. The youngest of the party asks what these mean, in order to keep up the tradition. They had changed

the manner of eating, now they were in the Promised Land, and they were on couches. "What do these things mean?" St. John says, and our Lord answers him. It was the last celebration of the type—the reality was now to take its place. Our Lord tells them all, describes the going out from Egypt, the wandering through the desert. How tantalizing it is to know so little! What a pleasure to have heard our Lord's public teaching, or His conversation with the disciples at Emmaus! What must His description have been of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and going through the desert, the pillar of fire and the cloud, and how at last God brought them to the Land of Promise. Our Lord tells us to interest ourselves in Him and to meditate: look how easy meditation becomes, if you take it in this way.

When the Paschal supper is nearly over, our Lord places the cup before Him and He rises. Before He does something very great, He begins with an act of humility. The more we humble ourselves, the more Almighty God will do for us. He is going to wash their feet, and comes to St. Peter, and St. Peter turns and exclaims, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" On the occasion of his memorable confession our Saviour had said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Peter, remembering this, and knowing He is God, puts the question in extreme surprise, like the Baptist, when he said, "I have need to be baptised by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Our Lord answers: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Now Peter has an

ardent disposition, and he says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Our Lord shows that he has made a great mistake by saying, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." The true humility is giving up our own way and going by God's way. Examine your motives—are you doing this or that, because it is your way or God's? Our Lord's answer is a serious one, and Peter flies off in the opposite direction. "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." What a grand answer! But our Lord goes on: "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all." There is His first allusion to Judas, and He kneels at the feet of Judas, and that is His way of winning a soul. Judas might have repented all that while: our Lord was offering him the means. Our Lord is kneeling at the feet of the Apostle who preferred thirty pieces of silver to his Master.

After that ceremony He instructs them in the lessons they are to learn from it: "Know you what I have done to you? . . . I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you also do." Look at the way He takes to move Judas. "Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray me." These eleven have lived with Judas and never suspected his treachery. Their freedom from rash judgments is such that they have no idea what our Lord means. Does that not show us what our charity should be and our humility? "Lord, is it I?" each one asks: that is the way in which they take it. And Judas says, "Is it I, Rabbi?" and our Lord

answers so that the others do not hear, "Thou hast said it." Peter wants to know and does not like to ask himself, so he signs to John to do so, and our Lord tells these two, "He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped." This act was a mark of intimacy, of the greatest consideration and tenderness, and our Lord bestows this mark of favour upon Judas. He would do all He could to change the will of His hardened disciple.

Whether Judas were present at the institution of the Blessed Sacrament is uncertain. I should think it probable. Twice the cup has passed—wine mingled with water,—and our Lord has the third cup of benediction before Him and the unleavened bread. He is lifting up His eyes to heaven and then pronouncing the words of consecration and working that miracle of love—the Blessed Sacrament. "I shall be taken from you, yet I cannot go. I will remain and be really present. I have been hidden as a man, I will be more hidden now. I will come to you as food and so maintain your spiritual life." With His own hand He gives Himself to each one. It is an immense act of omnipotence, and if He had not done it, we should not have known it could be done. It is the first of the series of Holy Communion that have gone on ever since, the first mass, the first time He appeared amongst them in sacramental form. Meanwhile one of His own disciples is plotting his betrayal, and the priests are plotting His death. Our Lord's way of strengthening Himself for His Passion is to do the greatest thing He can do for others. There is to be till the end of time that

food which He then provided for everyone who will come for it; and here we are hesitating and rather asking how few—instead of how many—shall be the times that we can come to receive it. Is it not strange we derive so little benefit from it, the inexhaustible fountain of grace? We go ill-prepared, our hearts so narrow, so choked up with earthly cares and affections.

Let us see then what we have got to do by frequent and fervent communions, and above all by using each communion as a thanksgiving for the former and a preparation for the one that is to follow.

SEVENTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

THE meditation we are about to make is one of the most important. We are to try to enter into our Lord's interior feelings. His agony was so intense that it caused the Precious Blood to flow. Being in an agony, He prays the longer. Why was it our Lord's pain was so very great then?

We must imagine the olive garden and the entrance near to which our Lord left eight of His Apostles. One had gone to carry out his design, and the three others He chooses to be witnesses of His agony. The transfiguration had fortified them to see their Lord cast down in such bitter anguish. We may see

what love there was for us in the Agony. From this time till when He dies, He is in desolation.

For our composition of place, then, we have to see the garden and the olives beneath which He prays on that moonlit night. And our petition is to be for a more intimate union with Him, that, as He is going to die for our sakes, we may have a thorough sympathy with Him and an intense love.

FIRST POINT.—He has intentionally let loose these feelings, in order that we may have recourse to Him as to one who has borne our infirmities. The Agony is voluntary, and so severe that it draws from Him that cry, “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.” Our Lord is now seeing the whole of His Passion, not as we anticipate things in a vague way, but He gazes into the mirror of His Godhead, and there He sees it. All the pains that are to be in His body and soul are now concentrated on His Sacred Heart. Those pains indeed had been visible to Him throughout His life, but He had held in restraint that passion of fear, so as not to feel it as He feels it now—a fear and repugnance surpassing all fear and repugnance any human being could ever feel. Think how repulsive that Passion was to Him always—to be given over to wicked men, to suffer all the pain they would inflict on His body, the outrages on His honour, the anguish of heart. Think of the cruelty with which they treated Him in the scourging and the crowning with thorns, in nailing Him to the Cross and raising Him on it as an object of scorn and contempt to those that pass by. Think of the pain He suffered from the good; what it cost

Him for our Lady to be there, for St. John to be there, for Magdalene to be there. Think what it cost Him that the Apostles should fly away and that Peter should deny Him ; He can distinguish the sufferings inflicted by each ; they did not interfere with one another at all.

Looking on through time He sees what is to befall the mystical members of His Body, how much pain they would have in their lives, and in attaining to the kingdom of heaven ; He sees the martyrdoms to be inflicted on His beloved. How He feels for the courage of His martyrs and their tortures before death ! He took each into His Heart. There was no confusion at all, He loved and felt for each one. We may surely understand how there was martyr after martyr insensible to pain. Our Lord had borne the pain first. He felt for the sufferings of His virgins and confessors. He knew all that it cost to overcome self—to perform the voluntary acts of self-denial and the involuntary acts that it necessitates. He knew all the pains of sickness and death, all the disappointments, hardships, calamities that would befall His elect ; and He gave His life for everyone. And not only for the members of His mystical Body—He looked over pagan worlds and died for *all*. He bore all the persecutions of the Church, all the assaults of the world, the guilt of schism.

Not one is left to himself. He bore any pain of mind and body we may have to endure. He bore all our anxiety, all our care, all it costs us to live our lives and die our deaths, to change pride into

humility and every vice to virtue. He has undergone it, He has kept the worst bitterness to himself, and it comes to me with His strength. In the day of judgment we shall see it all—we shall see how tolerable, how meritorious He has made it.

SECOND. He is there in His Agony as a victim for all the sins of mankind. Being absolutely innocent, He is there with the knowledge of every sin in all its circumstances, all its malice, and with everything that aggravates it. He, so holy, to have marshalled before Him all this mass of sin, would it not of itself be an agony? But not only to have it marshalled before Him, but to have it laid upon Him, attributed to Him as His own! If the sight of such sin is so utterly repellent, what is it to have it laid on Himself? Anything closer than that we can't imagine. How He shrinks! His Divinity sustains Him to bear the weight. All these sins produce an effect which has reference to His Eternal Father. The one thing that has sustained Him hitherto was His communing with His Eternal Father, and now this is shut out from Him and will be during all His Passion. He knows what sin is. We don't, because we don't know God. The perfect love of the Father makes Him so shrink from these sins that are laid upon Him. They are sins against Him, against His love, against the Father He loves, sins crowding in from all ages, past, present and future, as long as any should be living in this world. *Now* we have an adequate representation of the agony. We who live afterwards have an advantage over those who lived before. *I can live so as to cause Him less agony.*

Think what it is to confess our sins, to be forgiven by the Precious Blood, and then to relapse ; to know that He has so loved me and then to cause Him to be crucified again ! *There* is the advantage that we have ; we can say, “ In the rest of my life there shall be nothing that is not pleasing to Him. I will never deliberately offend Him, there shall only be little sins of frailty or surprise. He knew the use I was going to make of His grace. What did He see of my future ? There are so many things in the past that have faded from my mind. What did He see of my intentions now, and their carrying out when the retreat is over ? ”

“ And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.” What could the angel suggest ? Oh, Master, look and see the souls that will love You so much for what You are doing, with what contrition they will be filled, what use they will make of the Precious Blood, what merits they will acquire, what glory will be given to God ! It *was* a consolation. He did look and did see, but how much less He saw than He ought to have seen ! and how much less of comfort than that angel was able to tell Him ! For He saw those who refuse to make use of the graces purchased for them, who will not be saved, who reject the redemption He provides. No one commits sin without deliberation. That soul I died for, for that soul I paid a price which would have redeemed infinite worlds *in vain*. What an agony for our Lord to feel it is in vain ! He goes through soul after soul wilfully turning from Him.

Many were to be saved—*there* was comfort for Him, but some would be saved so shabbily, with so little love of God, so little glory given to God. He will wish that the glory of each one had been higher than it is : though their heaven is an unmixed joy to *them*, it might have been a brighter heaven. How much there was for him to feel even in the case of those who would be saved ! Those on whom He has conferred the largest privileges—daily mass, frequent communions, well-instructed consciences, all the spiritual helps that we enjoy—what about us ? How little love ! What poor returns ! what selfish lives ! what forgetfulness of Him ! We hardly know it is a communion day ; we can't keep alive the sense of His presence ; we find it hard to make an act of contrition ; we feel it a burden when He wants a sacrifice. In our after lives it is in our power to give consolation to His Sacred Heart, to be such that the angel may say, " See how Your love kindles love in their hearts, to do all they can to promote Your glory, to spread salvation, to carry out what You have laboured for in such weariness and sadness."

Let us tinge our souls in the Precious Blood, that our life may be a new life, that we may never be ashamed of Him, but that we may do all that His Heart is longing for, with that keenest gratitude and love which we cannot fail to give Him in return for the love He has poured out so freely on us.

SEVENTH DAY.

[8 P.M.]

THE PASSION.

WE are very near the end of our retreat. Take good care of the last day. The devil tries to shorten it and to disturb our recollection. Don't let the last day be frittered away.

We ought to have finished making our resolutions before the meditation on the Passion. Therefore the petition is different—it is that we may be united with Him, and suffer with Him. We are not considering the reform of our lives now. We are supposed to have made our plans for that. These meditations are to put the seal on what we have resolved. The knowledge and love of Him I got in meditating on His life ; I get more in His Passion, but I cannot keep apart from Him now ; I must suffer with Him.

With regard to the Passion, the meditation we last made was the key to it ; and we will take here and there a passage.

FIRST POINT.—The scourging of our divine Redeemer. Imagine the court-yard attached to the Pretorium—a magnificent palace adjoining the Temple. The Roman governor chose it that he might have his soldiers at hand in case of a rising, as the people assembled most in the Temple. What

mysteries happened in that place ! The soldiers sport with our divine Lord and prepare the crown of thorns, He freely offering Himself in the midst of His desolation, to be scourged for our sins and crowned in mockery. Scourging was a fearful punishment. When a slave was doomed to crucifixion, he was scourged first. The scourges consisted of thongs of leather, at the end of which were pellets of lead or sharp bones, bruising, cutting, curling round, tearing away the flesh. How bad it was we see from the fact that no Roman citizen could be scourged. The Roman writers speak of it with horror. We have no idea *now* of the extent to which cruelty has gone. Dislike to cruelty is quite a modern feeling. Think of the gladiators—when men had to fight and be killed for the amusement of others, or be thrown to the beasts, as the martyrs were. The more pain was inflicted, the more pleased were the spectators. Love of cruelty exists in some countries still. Now the severe operations are performed only when the patient can be rendered unconscious ; in olden times it was not so. These Roman soldiers had not the least feeling of compassion for our Lord ; it was a pleasure to them to cause pain. More than that, Pilate wants to save our Lord's life at the cost of any pain ; so he orders that the scourging should be severe. He thinks if the scourging is severe, the Jews will be satisfied and will not insist on His death. Pilate ought to have set Him free. "I can find no fault in Him, I will chastise Him therefore, and release Him." Pilate is willing to satisfy the

people. Look what human respect comes to ! He orders a severe scourging ; he thinks that will be sufficient to satisfy the malice of the Jews. So our Lord is taken to that court-yard where there is not a single friendly face, and they proceed to carry out orders. He is bound to a low column and His hands are tied. Two powerful men stand on each side, and first one and then the other delivers blows. See how He is bruised and cut, till at last His body is one great wound ! He stands there to be beaten and does not utter a single word. He is offering the pain and shame of that scourging for us. The powers of darkness have been let loose. They know He is the Son of God, and therefore, though they are aware that what they are doing goes to the overthrow of their own kingdom, they can't lose the opportunity of venting their rage. The Roman executioners are under the influence of the devils. It is a fearful thing to be on the wrong side. How terrible to know man is the cat's-paw of the devil ! The devils were not redeemed. Christ did die for the men whom devils employed. How terrible is man's ingratitude ! No devil can commit the sacrilege of a bad confession and a bad communion. Those things which were meant to bring men to heaven they use for their ruin. There are temptations men can employ that devils' can't. All this evil can be frustrated if we keep on our Lord's side, if we are with Him in His poverty and humility. We must remain as close to our Lord as we possibly can, be forgetful of ourselves, and not let ourselves be the instruments of the devil.

SECOND. When the scourging is over, they

cut Him loose. Look at the outpouring of the Precious Blood. See how all things there are marked by the Blood of God. There are these soldiers treading it under foot. What generosity in Him to pour it out so abundantly! What can we do in reparation? Does not that thought rise up within us? Cannot we do something to make atonement? Have we no fresh gratitude—no greater devotion with which to satisfy His loving Heart?

THIRD. Then comes His coronation. One brings a handful of long thorns, and another brings a reed for a sceptre, another fetches an old red cloak and puts it on His shoulder, and there He sits, and the other soldiers are summoned, and He is derided and mocked. They come up making mock genuflections, striking His face with blows, buffeting Him, He making no reply, uttering no remonstrance, His whole Heart given to us, thinking of the atonement He was making for us—thinking of our needs and not of Himself. These outrages were suggested by the devil. There is nothing so salutary as seeing Lucifer and his followers, and our Lord and those who belong to Him. Are we to be like Him? We may have to undergo mockery and derision—what is it when we compare it with that endured by our Redeemer? How should we be engaged in that court-yard? Were we not there? Those blows—from whom did they really come? Who knelt before Him in mockery? Oh, to think of the part I had in His Passion, and to think He will still let me be on His side, though I have been siding with his enemies

—to think that now He will let me come and love Him ! Look at these poor resolutions of mine, and He is content to take them ! Will not His scourging and crowning be a red seal confirming them, and inciting me to put into them more fervour, more love ? Our poor hearts will be poor hearts indeed if we are not prepared to do now what He asks of us.

SEVENTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE CRUCIFIXION.

PICTURE to yourself Cavalry and the three crosses, the place where He was to hang on high, of which He said : “ And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” We must ask to be drawn to Him—to feel in our hearts what He felt.

FIRST POINT.—What a revelation the Crucifix is as to the malice of sin ! The meditation on sin, on hell itself, is utterly inadequate ; the Cross alone reveals it to us. Nothing else was sufficient atonement. *All* the suffering our Lord went through in His Passion was not necessary. The Agony in the garden was infinitely precious ; that pouring out of His blood was infinitely precious. His being dragged into the city was infinitely precious. His standing before the tribunal was infinitely precious. Each outrage to which He was subjected—the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the way of the Cross, the pain caused

by each of the nails—was infinitely precious; and all the interior pains He endured—each one was infinitely precious. The redemption of the world could have been accomplished by the first act of adoration that went up from Him; an atonement of less than infinite value would not have satisfied, because the Father is infinite. The Passion does teach us what sin is. We should therefore hate sin as our Lord hated it. Oh, if the human race had but been innocent, and that He might have come and been with us and had our homage! How sin has spoilt all!

SECOND. Where else can I learn how He loves me? All the teaching of His life is brought home to me in the Passion. His sacrifice was offered for me. Those innumerable redemptions are not too many; and I have thought Him hard—I have felt a difficulty in bringing home to myself that He loved me; *now* I will try to love Him in return.

THIRD. How He cared for my soul! We are apt to think our salvation is not as important as it is. Little things take us up, and our body is preferred to our soul. Creatures get the preference to the Creator. How our Lord prizes our soul if He thought it worth dying for!

FOURTH. What grace He purchased for us at this great price! The inspirations He offers us are the fruit of His Passion—are we to sweep aside what He purchased for us? His Passion was to give us grace in this world and glory in the next. Every grace comes straight from the Cross. How we ought to value grace! How we ought to co-operate with it—with *each* grace! I am here to fulfil the Will of God:

every grace is given me for that: graces are not given me to use for myself—to enable me to be selfish. The way to mend is to look to Him—to fix our eyes on Him and not on ourselves.

FIFTH. He died for *me*. He gave Himself for me, but there is room in His heart for all. I must have zeal for the souls for whom Christ died. If the love of His Sacred Heart is extended to every human being, surely we must feel as He feels: surely we must have a longing for souls to be saved, an immense desire to promote His work in souls. See how we should unite our hearts with His and be able to help all—*all without exception*. There are a certain number in whom we take an interest, but what about those to whom we have an antipathy? Do we pray for the spread of His grace in their souls? Do we remember that He has called us to co-operate with Him?

Now to go back to the Crucifixion, with its three hours of darkness and silence: it seems as if the whole work were done in that darkness and silence. The words He speaks seem like antiphons. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Then to the penitent thief: “This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Then He turns to His chosen souls and bestows that precious gift of Mary on His beloved John; and then at last He has time to think of Himself and His longing for His Eternal Father: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” In those four words He gives us an insight into the thoughts of His Heart. Acts of adoration are rising up from the altar of the Cross. He began with

adoration, He will end with it. Adoration is the work of the creature, and He was enabled to do these human acts with an *admirable perfection*. The union of our acts with His makes them worthy. That act of adoration is an offering of Himself upon the Cross, giving to God a fitting worship. Not till He came did God ever have from any creature a worship worthy of Him. The loftiest worship is in sacrifice. What grand compensation does our Lord make for our miserable shortcomings, for the little heart in our prayers, the want of sacrifice in them! And what prayers ours *might be*!

Then that He should be so conscious of our needs that He should give us in the holy mass that self-same sacrifice, the same oblation offered to the eternal Father—this is going on still! We can unite ourselves with the august sacrifice ever being offered throughout the world. He offers Himself, not merely to make up for what we did not do, but to help us that we may make up. He would do what we could not for ourselves, and, looking on our cold hearts, He has made His sacrifice one of *thanksgiving*—*Eucharist*. How dear the mass should be! Our Lord taking up our little acts as we unite them with His sacrifice, we seem to cease to be finite; while the acts are our own, they meet the requirements of the Infinite. How can He do otherwise than hear our prayers when backed by His sacrifice? There is the impetration of the mass to support our prayers. It is a sacrifice of satisfaction, of all that was needed that we should be forgiven. Forgiveness is ready for us all, and satisfaction that shall extend to every

portion of punishment due. Satisfaction sufficient for the sins of a life, and satisfaction for a plenary indulgence. Ought we not to have these ends distinct in our minds when we assist at mass?

Our Lord on the Cross was making acts of humility, submission, obedience. He will enjoy to make these acts through eternity. He loves to make them, and *we* find it so difficult! Let us see what acts we can make, and how closely we can unite them to His. We shrink from humiliation because our pride is so sensitive.

There was darkness and silence through those three hours, as though the great sacrifice was to be accomplished in calmness and quiet. Hitherto, from His prayers in the garden when armed men came to take Him, till the last reproach was uttered and the darkness followed, there was one long scene of violence and tumult. The majesty of sacrifice required calm and silence. Our blessed Lady knew what was passing, and offered the sacrifice of what was dearest to her. He hung there and uttered no word. Those hours must have seemed interminable: was that day never to end?

The darkness clears, and they see each other's faces, and our Lord as He hangs on His Cross. Now comes that word of obedience, "I thirst;" then the great proclamation of the completion of the Redemption, "It is finished;" and lastly the filial word of love and confidence with which His life is to end, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

How *little* we think what a part *our* sins had on His sensitive Heart! He had such a thought of the

honour of His Father, such a desire that the glory of God should be promoted in *all* things, that He gave Himself on the Cross as a perfect victim, and He had such love for each one of us that He gave Himself to be a perfect Saviour. O Jesus, be to me a Saviour. Let me not be unworthy of a single one of those graces, let none be wasted. May I give love for love, and may I lead such a life that every thought and word and act may show that my heart is filled with love of Him who loved me and loved me to the end.

CONFERENCE.

EIGHTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

PERSEVERANCE.

ANSWER to a question.—Sufferings brought on by oneself, by one's own sins, can give as much grace if well borne as those brought on by others. Supposing for years previous to our conversion we have been contracting bad habits, when once we are converted the resistance to these bad habits may be most meritorious. Take all your sins to the Sacred Heart, and don't be afraid of them.

This is our last conference. The use of the retreat is for the time that is coming after, more than for the retreat itself. We have found, I hope, that it

is not as hard as it looks to aim at perfection—not so hard as it looks to practise the third degree of humility. We have got it plainly before us, and we know what we have got to do ; and God will give us grace to help us. The important part is the way in which you live afterwards in accordance with what you resolved on. I have been with God, and He has been good to me ; it is time I began to serve Him in earnest. The devil will try to prevent it, as for example by human respect. Don't mind anything.

Every improvement in your life ought to be intrinsic, interior, part of yourself, that you may be a different person—*totus, solus, alius*. Go into retreat, keeping nothing back ; remain alone with God ; go out changed. The devil will try to make you give up your change ; he will try your constancy. Don't say "It is all up with me" on the first occasion he gets you to break your resolutions. Renew them again and again. You are not to be discouraged, you won't have lost the good you have been getting, your retreat is a fact and is there to testify. You yourself must remember that, however often you fail, you still have to take it up afresh—that resolution ; you are never to say, "Its too late for me to take it up." Put away that *false idea* that, like porcelain, a resolution if once broken is broken for ever.

With regard to falls—we have seen the extreme probability of falls coming—what is to be done ? This—get up again. The harm is in not recovering quickly. If you lose heart, who knows how long you may be down ? Rise at once ; the quicker you are the better, and I don't see why you should be lower than

before. The humility and sorrow you show will make you regain the ground you had lost. Be sorry for your falls, but never think they are fatal.

Make your resolution about your spiritual duties, and see that these are properly done. Certain things are enemies, you must settle how to overcome them. Anything which breaks in on our rule—a journey for instance—is an enemy. You can't get to mass; make a spiritual communion instead, say your beads as fervently as you can, and when the obstacle is removed, take up the good position again immediately. When you are prevented from doing one thing, substitute another for it. Illness comes perhaps, in which your one duty is to be patient; convalescence, during which time see how fervent you can be, what ejaculations you can make, what spiritual communions. Don't let it be the beginning of a tepid state. It is of great importance to fix times—don't let *little* indispositions prevent you from going to the sacraments. I owe myself a communion, see that you get it, so as not to have missed it. The day comes for confession; you say, "Oh, I don't feel inclined." Never mind—*go*. It is easy always to remember that you may take a past sin to confession and get the sacramental grace. The devil tries to get us to be *less good*, if he can't get us to sin. Don't let him discourage you. Temptations are a mark of God's favour. How could we share His victory if we are not tempted? We have a vague feeling of uneasiness after temptation. Don't indulge it. If the sole result of the devil's temptation is that you get nearer to our Lord, he will soon find it injures him; but if

he can leave you in a state of discouragement, he will be satisfied and will go on repeating it. You are not to look on yourself as supremely safe, but you are to be resolved not to be discouraged. Go out of retreat with generous dispositions, giving to God all He asks, not begrudgingly or of necessity. Give God the trouble that is needed for the overcoming of yourself. Have the disposition that would give God more if you had it to give. Do your best, and if it is not high, humble yourself ; and if your best discourages you, humble yourself more.

With regard to keeping a record of your duties. Write down a list of certain duties, meditation, mass, meals, conversations, etc. Ask how each is done every day. Where there has been neglect—spiritual failure—mark 0 ; 1 will stand for something, not much ; 2, fair ; 3, very good. There is a 4 I hope to write down some day. Why should I not more often be able to write down 3 ? This practice is a little bit tying, but we can't get good without a little tying.

Whether we have worn our scapular for years, or are now receiving it for the first time, let us be children of Mary indeed, and ask her to draw from the treasures of the graces of her Son for us. Dislike to give her a shabby thing, be always the child of Mary, let your refuge be under her mantle. Beg that if the day should arrive when you become neglectful, she will bring you back, so that at last you may rejoice in your mother's presence, and thank her for the care she has taken of you. I hope we have learnt in this retreat to look into our blessed Lord's life, how we are to study and imitate His example,

feeling sure of abundant grace and help, so long as we are endeavouring to draw near to and dwell ever in His Sacred Heart.

EIGHTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE RESURRECTION.

LET us imagine the Holy Sepulchre, where the body of our Lord rested, where after He had risen He appeared to Magdalene ; and let us pray that we may rise with Him and lead a life conformed to His risen life.

FIRST POINT.—His resurrection teaches us what we are to look forward to. He has passed through death ; then comes the resurrection. Those who have fought on His side are to have a resurrection like His. Look what the qualities are of a risen body—material, tangible, with its ancient features, yet so different ; the same, yet changed and elevated. Our Lord rises *impassible*, incapable of suffering. He was capable of suffering before, because He so willed it. We shall be impassible. How short life will look ! How little we shall think of its sufferings, however long they have been ! We are not now speaking of Purgatory ; after the general judgment there will be no possibility of suffering. We are ever getting nearer to death. What a content to be clothed with

our bodies again—immortal bodies, *impassibility* being the warding off those things that cause death. *Subtlety* will enable us to pass through material things. Our Lord passing through the stone of the sepulchre and the closed doors of the upper room shows what an amount of spirituality is conferred on the body. *Agility* enables the body to be wherever it likes—to go any distance by the mere act of volition. *Glory* makes the body itself shine magnificently ; it will be the property of those whose souls are gazing on God.

Our Lord rises. He leaves Limbo, where He has consoled the faithful souls and given them the Beatific Vision. We shall come face to face with Him. Those who gaze on His Sacred Humanity will have the vision of God given them ; the material body will be the casket in which the soul is placed, and it will be impossible to do otherwise than give glory to God. In the particular judgment will be assigned to us our nearness to God. What have we to live for but *to be nearer to Him for all eternity* ? All the blindness will be taken away ; seeing Him, we shall be drawn to Him, our will concurring in an absolutely perfect service. To set *ourselves* up will be absolutely impossible in heaven. We owe heaven to our blessed Lord.

Let us go back. Our Lord brings forth all those in Limbo and brings them to the Sepulchre. This miracle had never happened before, for He raised Himself by His own power—no creature could do that ; and there in presence of all the saints and patriarchs He re-invests Himself with His adorable body ; the Precious Blood always adorable is

brought back, and the glorified body passes through the sealed stone, the guards being quite unconscious of the mystery. He goes to visit His blessed Mother—an unrecorded visit; and what a change for her! She has been separated from Him, and on her imagination those terrible scenes of the Passion were burnt in. All the pain which made Mary Queen of Martyrs came from Him: it is not just that the Crucifixion should ever be forgotten, but now it is to be illuminated by His risen glory. He has but to show her some portion of the happiness which fills His Heart, and thus she will be able to endure the pain all the future fulfilling of His Will will cost, even though it should entail her remaining here on earth when He should have ascended. And I have no doubt that our Mother was not unmindful of the Apostle who stood beside her at the Cross, and that, bearing in mind she had a special relationship with John, she asked that he should be a sharer in her joy, and know of the Resurrection by sight before any of the others. Must we not remind our Mother we too are her children—"Shew unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus!"—and ask her that she will show us how we are to see Him? Oh that she would make us partakers in her joy in that measure we are capable of on earth!

The next appearance is to Magdalene, *of course*. She is to have the happiness of communicating it to the Apostles. The angel has descended and rolled away the stone, the stone that had been sealed by the enemies of Christ. When the angel came down and threw the stone aside, the rays of the eastern sun

came into the inner sepulchre where He *had* been. It faced the east, and the light came that we might see the empty tomb. See how His humiliations have passed away! The holy women had come when yet dark, wondering what they should do about the stone, and, finding it rolled away, went to the Apostles. "Certain women of our company affrighted us, who before it was light were at the sepulchre, and not finding the body, came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive." They pass on. Not so Magdalene. The soldiers have gone, and she stands there, not understanding what the angels had said, and thinking He has been taken away. Where could she go when this is the sepulchre? He accosts her, but she does not see Him. She hears some-one and is out with her petition, "If thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him." There is no confusion in her love—it is a glorious triumphant love, her love of Him who forgave her and called her to Himself and let her sit at His feet and drink in celestial things. Her own name is uttered by that familiar voice; He knows His sheep by name. How often He had summoned her by name! Each time preceded some benediction. It had seemed to her she had heard it for the last time, and He is alive again and He belongs to her, and He claims her by her name—His own. And she casts herself down to kiss those feet again; but He has a work for her to do—to go and tell His disciples and Peter that He is risen and will be in Galilee. What a lot was that of Magdalene! What can be done by keeping close to our

Saviour's feet ! When she is on her way, He goes to the women and meets them on the road. They too had been on Calvary, showing courage when the hearts of men had failed. He permitted them to kiss His feet.

Peter and John come running to the sepulchre. John has said nothing—if he has seen his Lord, it was as the special child of Mary, not as an Apostle. If Magdalene has seen Jesus at the sepulchre, may not he too see Him there? Peter enters in and finds the cloths, and they come out. And Peter wends his way back pondering, with the grief for having denied His Master in his heart ; he wanders on, hoping, and he sees his Master. What passed in that interview? This too was an official interview—the *first* official interview was to Magdalene. What passed between the heart of the Master and His penitent is a secret. “ O Peter, I have died for thee ! ” What a change there is in that impetuous heart ! what humiliation ! How ready now for the martyrdom that is to follow !

Then there were the two who had gone away early to Emmaus. Our Lord makes Himself known to them in the Eucharist, and they, hastening back, are in time for His visit in the upper room, when He instituted the Sacrament of Penance on that day of glory, and empowers the Apostles to absolve and to transmit this power to their successors.

Should we not have said our Lord would fly off from the world which had treated Him so badly? Surely His Body will rise up to heaven ; instead of which He lingers. He stays to see what more He

can do for us, and to have talks with His Apostles about the kingdom of God. The old self-forgetfulness is in Him still; He loves as He has loved us throughout His life, carrying up to His Eternal Father the sincere love for sinners which has filled His Sacred Heart from the moment He united it to His Divinity.

Oh, our dearest Mother! What should we do without her. Let us be her true children and never do a thing not fit to pass through her hands. What a pleasure to her is every fresh homage to her Divine Son. Give her the gratification of offering to Him what is most pleasing to her—that which He will like.

EIGHTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINE LOVE.

LOVE is known by deeds rather than by words, rather than by aspirations, rather than by resolutions. If those resolutions are kept, they become “deeds” by which love is shown.

Where there is love there is readiness to give.

COMPOSITION OF PLACE.—To see heaven opened to us—good angels and saints looking down on us with affection, praying that we may so live that we may come at last and see the reward prepared for us—that all our difficulties may be overcome.

PETITION.—That fully conscious of the goodness of

God to us, our hearts may be so full of gratitude that we may give Him all the love that is ours to give. (Make your act of gratitude, if you want to get contrition.)

I will think of all God's benefits to me : how He created me, always intending to create me ; how He has filled me with graces so that I may come to attain heaven, and surrounded me with creatures which, by my use of one and avoiding of another, may all help me to attain that end ; how He has plentifully supplied me with means by which I should be happy hereafter. Then my preservation. He has always been bearing me in mind. If He had forgotten me for a moment, I should have ceased to be. I must thank Him then for my continual creation, keeping me here, His providence making all things work for my good. He intends me to derive good from everything : if I do wrong, it is solely through my bad will ; nobody can force me to do wrong. The temptations are for my good. Evil wills can't affect me if I have recourse to God. They were overcome by Agatha, Lucy, Agnes and countless other martyrs. In their martyrdoms was the providence of God just as in the death of our divine Redeemer on the Cross.

Then there is the redemption and all that it brings—that I have the true religion, faith, grace to confess God before men ; the Communion of Saints, that the Church unites me with all the holiness of saints on earth, in Purgatory and in heaven, I a sharer in their riches, their offerings helping me ; the sacraments, and *such sacraments*—the graces of

them for me—hope as well as faith—grace certain to abide with me so far as God is concerned—that grace which brings with it heaven. I have not taken possession yet, but I have the title-deeds ; charity is mine, heaven is mine—my own,—and indeed I will hold it by humility, by dread of myself, by keeping close to God, by a constant use of grace, by recourse to our Lady and to all the inhabitants of heaven. All this is mine. He has given it to me. How can I not have gratitude ? It moves me to love.

And God is with each gift He bestows on me. In creation, in the Incarnation, in redemption, in the sacraments it is always God Himself bestowing His gifts, as though He would *make* us accept Himself. Each one is bestowed in love and in each one the Giver Himself. What am I to do in return ? What offering can I make ? “ Take, O Lord, for it is Thine own, and receive it at my hands—*all* that I have and am—my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will.” I would make over my liberty to God, being certain that by losing it I am gaining it. If I can secure all my will, I am safe—to God I restore it. There is not a thing that has not come to me from Him : they all come as splendid materials for sacrifice. Yet I have to use these powers ; but whereas before I regarded them as my own, now I have given them to Him and only hold them as a loan ; my liberty is no longer mine. I use it on loan in the way my sovereign Lord and Master would have me use it.

God is present in His gifts. I delight to be in His presence, to recognise His presence, to be in

happiness, because He is there. God treats me as His temple, and I find Him within me. This God who is so close to me is always working for me, caring for me, so that He causes the sun to rise and the earth to bring forth products. In return I should work for Him, make the best use in my power of everything He has given me, make use of all the means I have for His glory.

If I see in myself any power of good of any kind, He took it from Himself. He chose some portions of His perfections and bestowed them on me. He unites me with His Divine Majesty, binds me up with Himself, raises me above my nature, transforms me into His family, so that I should be called the child of God.

Here you have a meditation which would last you for weeks. Dip into it for your colloquy. Your prayer is to be that in your daily life you may make good use of the grace that is *always* with you. Look what meaning you will then attach to the words, "Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

MORNING OBLATION.

O LORD my God, I offer unto Thee all that I have and am, my memory, my understanding and my will, my imagination and my liberty, all the senses of my body and all the affections of my soul, every thought, word and deed, voluntary and involuntary, this day and all future days, to the honour and glory of Thy Sacred Heart, in union with Thy thoughts, words and deeds, Thy prayers and pains, together with Thy august Sacrifice throughout the whole world, the Immaculate Heart of Thy dearest Mother, Thy nine choirs of Angels and all Thy Church triumphant, my Patron Saint and Guardian Angel, and the English Martyrs, for whose canonization I heartily pray.

NOTES OF RETREAT.

1879.

SPIRITUAL RETREATS

PREPARATORY PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION.

I will place myself, before I kneel down, in the presence of God, Who sees me, and full of reverence for His Majesty and of confidence in His goodness and mercy, I will kneel and say :

O Lord my God ! I most firmly believe that Thou art here present. I acknowledge myself to be utterly unworthy to remain before Thy Face on account of my many sins, of which I repent with all my heart and soul. I adore Thee profoundly to the best of my knowledge and my power.

O Lord my God ! I offer unto Thee this my prayer. Grant that my offering may be acceptable unto Thee, and help me to direct to Thy Glory all my thoughts, all my words, and all the affections of my soul in this hour, which may be the last of my life.

AFTER MEDITATION.

REFLECTION.

1. Preparation and recollection.
2. Reverence, attention, devotion in preparatory prayer, preludes.

REFLECTION.

3. Memory :

Who ? what ? where ? why ? when ? for whom ?
with what fruit ? with what love ?

4. Understanding :

Practical conclusion.

Its motives : just, useful, delightful, easy, necessary.

What have I done hitherto ?

What shall I do henceforward ?

What obstacle is there ?

What means am I to take ?

5. Will :

Affections throughout : faith, sorrow, humility.
confidence, hope, praise, thanksgiving, love.

Resolution : practical, humble, devout.

6. Colloquies.

7. Distractions.

8. Full time, and more in desolation.

9. How can the next Meditation be better ?

I will write down shortly any thought God has given me that will be of use to my soul.

JULY TWENTY-SECOND, 1879.

[8.30 P.M.]

PREPARATORY MEDITATION.

THE END OF MAN.

THE subject for our meditation to-morrow morning is to be the most elementary of all truths, but one from which we derive the greatest rest and consolation. I have come from the Hands of God in order that I may save my soul. God made me, and the God who made me is the great God; and He made me from all eternity, for God has existed from all eternity and His Divine purposes were ever present to His mind. Here we should find matter for many meditations. The great God did not disdain to think of *me*. It is a false humility to say, I am not worthy that God should think of me; true humility consists in recognising the truth, and this is the truth—that God has thought of *me*, of my being, of my immortal soul. He created me and was always, always thinking of me, and not only thinking of me but thinking of me with love. His divine Majesty, gazing on Himself, saw some of His divine perfections that were communicable, and singling out some, destined them for *me*, and destined *me* to be an image of Himself, and to be with Him for all eternity.

God then was always thinking of me and thinking of me with love. He destined me for an end that would make me happy; He intended that I should have a certain time of probation, and in order that my service of Him should be voluntary, He bestowed on me the great gift of free-will.

God made me that I might praise, reverence and serve Him in this world, and be happy with Him for ever in the next. It is impossible to dwell on this thought in any other spirit than that of delight. God has put me in a direct relationship with Himself; it is not an angel or a saint I am to praise, reverence and serve, but the great God Himself: it is well to ponder on this, since it is what God has intended me for from all eternity.

FIRST POINT.—Now, what is it to praise, reverence and serve? The Catechism teaches us in simple words that God created us that we might *know* Him, *love* Him and *serve* Him here and be happy with Him for ever hereafter. St. Ignatius puts it—to *praise, reverence and serve* God. What is the connection between the two phrases—to know and to love, to praise and to reverence? The whole of knowledge and love may be absorbed into *praise*: praise is a loving intelligence or an intelligent love. He must have a cold heart who possesses knowledge or intelligence without love. The knowledge of God on which love beams immediately becomes fruitful and goes on increasing until it is an *intelligent love* or a *loving intelligence*, and this is the only thing which deserves the name of praise. A cold knowledge of God, however good and great in itself, would not be praise. Praise therefore

implies not only knowledge but love. To put God first and foremost—that is praise. When we know and love God, He comes first in everything with us. He is supreme ; to know my place and my work in relation to Him—that is praise.

SECOND. What is there further, to which this knowledge and love would lead? The Catechism puts *service—to serve*. St. Ignatius adds one other thing—*reverence—to revere* ; in other words an exterior and an interior service of God. Exterior service causes me to prostrate myself on my knees in His divine presence ; interior service directs every beating of my heart to Him. To serve Him is to dedicate my will to His service. He has created me with a will of my own ; when I make my will one with His, then I am serving Him. *To have no will but His*—this it is for which He created me, by this it is that I am to praise, reverence and serve Him. While I live I have nothing else to do but to do His Will ; all the time of my probation I have to aim at this, until in eternity I shall do it fully and perfectly. Here I can but do my best to give Him the praise and worship that is His due. What could I do if it were not for the holy sacrifice of the Mass? There at least He receives an adequate sacrifice of praise and adoration.

Now to turn to myself. God's service—that substituting His Will for mine—how little have I hitherto carried it out ! How wilful have I been ! I have allowed creatures to draw me away from that for which He intended me from all eternity. I will cast myself before His divine Majesty with deep

compunction for having wandered away from the end of my creation, longing and desiring with my whole heart that now and henceforth my work through life may be to praise, reverence and serve Him.

Here is the subject for to-morrow morning's meditation. If you find it appeals more to your head than your heart (though indeed there is no subject more calculated to move the heart), remember it is absolutely necessary that you should thoroughly understand and master it, in order that a solid foundation should be laid for the work of the exercises.

FIRST DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE USE OF CREATURES.

IT is very essential to get what St. Ignatius calls the foundation of the Exercises well into our minds, that the principles may be at hand through the retreat. Having put before me that God made me for His special service, St. Ignatius goes on to say that all other things were made to help me to attain that end. Does it not seem strange—God created me for this end and I have not followed it? Creatures have filled my mind.

We saw that praise meant *preference*—not the

praise of the lips, but the silent, deep praise of the heart. Over and over again I have preferred creatures, not necessarily sinfully, but inordinately. Some creatures took my preference. Then in my service, my devotion of myself to His Will, some creature has induced me to have a will of my own. Creatures seem to be my enemies. Had I been isolated, I could have concentrated my will on God. But what sort of preference would that be, to prefer God because there was no other? What kind of a probation would it have been had I been set in a Paradise with nothing to tempt me? What merit could I have gained? It was necessary I should be placed amongst others.

But God created other people and things that they should *help* me. This brings us to the exact reverse. All are made that they may be helps to me, that I may prefer Him, may revere Him in the midst of them, that I may show my reverence by the way in which I am willing to give them up for Him. What do I mean by all other things? Everything besides God and myself. *I* have my relations so direct from God that the grandest angel is one of those creatures, so far as I am concerned. Though he is so high, he ranks amongst those creatures.

Not objects only, but events also must form part of my surroundings, in order that God may be praised. Perhaps it is no effort to us to recognise that a severe winter is from God; but when human agency comes in, we are apt to forget that it is God's work. The result of what others do, the final effect on me, is a creature made by God, in order that it may be

a help to me. Grand idea! God over-ruling the wills of men, so that as far as I am concerned they are positively helpless!

In what way are creatures to be used? First, by contemplation. I can see God in them. I must get at Him, and see Him as best I can in this world. In creatures I can see Him. I have only to open my eyes and look. Why have I not seen Him in them? He is not on the surface—have I not thought Him worth looking for? Can you imagine any creature being an accomplice in wrong, when the image of God is seen in that creature? How long would the hostility towards any human being last, if in Him we saw our God? Here is our safeguard. To recognize in others the Image of God is to recognize their greatness.

Had we had our eyes open, how much might we not have learnt! We learn much from a flower; but what is a flower compared with the spiritual creation? Creatures then are so many weapons God intends us to employ—bread made on purpose for us. The world has no other end but this. Why not lay aside our miserable vanity and content ourselves with the grandeur God has given us? With our relations to God, and creatures made subject to us, have we not enough to satisfy us? What God did in bringing all living creatures to Adam was to be a law for all time. Man, gifted with free-will, was truly made their lord. By man's use of creatures God is to be glorified. Let them become obstacles to man's service of God, God is robbed of the glory that was to come to Him from them. God has been prodigal of His gifts. He

has made us capable of taking pleasure in them. Flowers, beautiful landscapes, sunshine, music,—who placed these pleasures within our reach? Our Father who meant to be glorified by the pleasure they would give us. Did God ever say I was not to enjoy them? How is it our hearts are not lifted up in gratitude, reverence and adoration? Surely the goodness of God Himself should be sufficient to draw us to Him. God comes first, and the giver should be before the gift.

The use of creatures is also to afford us a remedy. We have to put from us at times pleasant things and suffer pain—and we need the pain. We are not always to have enjoyment. To let the horse go where he will is not to tame him. We require discipline. We are to learn patience, obedience and mortification by resigning what we are attracted to. So now that we see how God has put the end of our creation before us, and how He helps us to attain it, the conclusion I should arrive at is that I ought to be able to praise, revere and serve my God. It ought not to cost much. He has made me for that end, and I am made by a skilful workman. In the creatures He gives me His wisdom is at work: my portion in life, my companions, the place where I live—there is no one thing He has not thought of, and seen that was the means that would help me to my end. It cannot be a difficulty to me to save my soul. Having praised Him here, I am to come to Him hereafter. Heaven—where I am to spend my eternity—is no unattainable good. He made me on purpose—He made me for Heaven. He arranged

all that I may pass through my probation well. So then the things that have been hindrances are now to be encouragements. I will have sorrow and compunction when I see how I have failed, but also great gratitude and hope, and a resolution never again to frustrate His divine intention. I will be confident in Him. Can I help trusting Him? My hope is in Him who made me. He guards me. He can arm me against myself. All that is external—angels and men alike—help me to praise my God. Temptations occupy the same position as a means that I may be led to revere, praise and serve my God. This retreat! He has brought me here that the result of my coming may be that I may praise and serve Him here and in Heaven. This is a mark of His love. He is ready to carry out the work He has begun. Our prayer shall be that as He has begun a good work He will complete and finish it, and that we may ever advance in a spirit of perfect confidence in Him.

SPIRITUAL READING, *first day*—Imitation of Christ, I. 20 ; III. 9.

PATRONS—our Holy Guardian Angels.

EXAMEN—Meditations and Prayers.

C O N F E R E N C E .

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION.

WE must try and aim at cheerfulness in this retreat. If we are in earnest and looking at it as a turning point, and as a time when we are to receive graces of unusual magnitude, there is no reason why we should not be bright and happy. We know we are in the hands of our God, and this should keep our hearts cheerful.

As regards spiritual reading during the retreat, I like the *Imitation*. Read *quietly and meditatively*, not in a hurry, but only with a view of drawing fruit. But for reading when you want to take the strain off your mind, choose the Life of a saint perhaps, or a chapter in Rodriguez.

The fruit of the retreat will mainly depend on how we keep the rule of silence. For the sake of recollection keep silence all through the retreat. Spiritual reading, mass, everything is to be subsidiary to the work of the retreat—the meditations and prayer. Our work for the next two or three days is to prepare for confession and to abstain from Holy Communion. Our aim is to do simple things much

better than we have done them hitherto, and first to prepare for the sacraments. The reason why we should postpone our communion is that we are to be occupied in confession.

To-day we will consider the question of meditation as it will affect us when the retreat is over. You say, "I do my best, but nothing comes of it." Is it necessarily so? The saints look on meditation as the way in which the day is to be sanctified, and they themselves kept near to God. Do we go the right way to work? The rules are not really difficult. Preparation is half the battle. What do I mean by preparing over night? People content themselves with reading three or four points, but it does not follow that the meditation is prepared. The preparation should be more personal; it should concern *me*. My only object in making meditation is that I may pray. To think over a truth is not prayer. If the will remains dormant, it is not a meditation, a prayer: it may be a study. Meditation is to be not a thinking time, but a praying time.

You have a subject-matter, but it may be barren to *you*. You must look to see what benefit you are to get from it. If you see something that will affect *you*, that is Preparation. A light is given you—"That is where it is going to help *me*: there is the lesson, the fruit, the grace I am to get from it."

The Preludes suppose a wise orderly manner of doing the thing. The second Prelude is a petition for fruit—ask straight for that. The first Prelude is the composition of place, and this is not to be as of something that happened far away, and a long time

ago ; but *I* am to form part of it. I am to see and hear. I want this word of my Lord to be real to me. I want to see how He looks at me, how He speaks to me. It is not necessary to make a picture, but to turn what would be old into new, to make it a reality to me now.

Before going on with the subject matter of the meditation, I wish to insist on the great importance of ending the day rightly. See that the preparation for the morning's meditation is made, and the examen of conscience is made, and that you belong to God and that everything else is excluded. It is well worth while not only to try, but to resolve you *will* do this. St. Ignatius gives us the way in which the last minutes of the day and the very last are to be spent. Recall the hour you are to rise—name to yourself the precise time and the subject of your meditation. Let the composition of place be present to you then. Try this during the retreat. I know our Lord's way of speaking to each. Each one is to gather her own special fruit. Never mind if you miss all the rest, but grasp what you want as the subject of your meditation. Keep it and try to fall asleep on it.

FIRST DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

INDIFFERENCE TO CREATURES.

So far from the end for which God created us being difficult, we find it is easy, all the circumstances of our life having been arranged to combine to that end. We want now to find how creatures should be what God meant them to be. St. Ignatius says I must use them just so far as they conduce to that end. If we acted on this principle, our life would be right. But as we lose sight of it, we must consider and see how we can get right. Those who wish to be physicians, or students, or soldiers, take the means best adapted to their purpose. But we are guided by our likes and dislikes instead of by our reason. With only a natural knowledge of God, we might have drawn out all that we have hitherto been meditating. Because I have consulted my likes and dislikes, things have gone wrong. *Now* I intend to be actuated by this alone—Is it the right thing? Is it that by which I can praise and revere my God?

Creatures are mostly attractive or repulsive—not simply indifferent. I am not to be guided by my attractions, but by my reason. Reason tells me many things are good for me which nevertheless are unpleasant. Can I not stop the attractiveness and

repulsiveness? This can be done by my remembering what they are meant for—*i.e.*, *to enable me to serve my God*. That puts me into a state of indifference—indifference, not *insensibility*. I am to feel. I must be attracted to what is good. God does not want me to be insensible. I must prefer some to others: it must be so. The indifference I have to acquire is—not to be insensible—but to be conscious that what my friends have is only to lead me to a certain point. I must steer in this direction, but there is the current I must take into account, that I may choose exactly aright. I am to render myself indifferent, because I cannot tell beforehand what God is going to choose for me. There is no need of indifference when I am certain it is the right means to my end, but it may cease to be the means, and then I must be prepared to give it up. The sacraments are always means, but then they are not earthly. My priesthood and religious life I need never be indifferent about, because I know these to be God's Will and to be determined and unchangeable. Indifference expresses this part of a truth—that whilst there is a chance of change, I am to hold myself so detached as to be ready for it, if it may conduce to my salvation.

St. Ignatius gives us four examples:—

1. Long or short life. Well! by either we may glorify God. St. Paul says, "I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." We may say that, or we may say, "By living longer I may merit more." My eternity may be influenced by even a few minutes more of life. I can't choose. I am not to be

influenced by the love of life for life's sake. Thank God, we have not to make a choice. He settles it. I had better set myself free, make my will go with the Will of God, that when He says I have lived long enough I may be ready. And we shall apply this to the minor circumstances of death. What is the use of a wish?

2. Riches and poverty. How can I be indifferent as to these? I can't choose. That will come which God will send. From either state good may come. To be rich and to be detached from riches—oh, how great! To be poor and to love poverty—*the first long step towards perfection!* To be indifferent—God knows what is coming, and that which comes will be the best. The rich to become poor, and to bear it well; to be prepared for poverty by detachment and indifference—how may not God be so glorified! He sends the means by which He shall be praised and His Will performed, and who can say what is to come?

3. Honour and dishonour. Honour is often a good instrument in God's hands, and so is dishonour. Things are said and a reputation goes—how soon that may happen to me! And am I to be so attached to my reputation that if God wishes me to praise Him by being dishonoured I shall rebel? How shall I help rebelling if I am not indifferent?

4. Health and sickness. Health is so exhilarating, makes me able to do so much for God, and it goes. Am I to be so attached to health that if God wants me to reverence Him by sickness I am to refuse? Is my will to be so strong that God is not to have a counter will?

The place where we live—how little is that under our control ! Yet we get such vehement attachments to places. Not that we are not to see the difference, but we are not to root ourselves so firmly that if God transplants us we are to be sickly.

We are to learn indifference too with regard to people. In the future I do not know with whom I may have to live. God means those I live with to be a help, and when they die their deaths are to be a help. That which comes will be to His glory, He settles for us. He parts us from our companions ; we rebel, because we are not detached. This detachment is perfectly compatible with all the claims of natural and supernatural affection. Look at Mary at the foot of the Cross. Jesus of His own free will makes His Mother the sharer of His sufferings.

Every act of patience and charity towards the people I live with, every little surrender of my own inclinations may conduce to my salvation ; why should I say *my* taste is good, this is *my* way, therefore the right way ? Why am I to be so intolerant ? If I have to live with people whose tempers and caprices try me, God's glory may be advanced by my patience, by the way in which I am kind and hide away every trace of the pain I suffer, and return prayers and thanks for it all. How may not my salvation be furthered by such a life ? But I want to give the tone and to have all agree with me. I shall never get right till I am indifferent, and when next I meet with something that provokes me, I will remember this.

Or my occupations are interfered with. I have unnecessary pain ; because I don't remember that I am

to desire things so long, and so long only as they help me. Or consolation is withdrawn. To enjoy prayer, to feel we are really drawing near to God ; what a contrast is this with the time when we bring ourselves unwillingly to prayer, when all is so distasteful ! Which would you choose ? I hope you would say, “ O Lord, Thou knowest I have no choice as to whether I have to fight my way through coldness, or brightened by the attractiveness of spiritual consolation. I know not which is best. God knows. So, though I am conscious how pleasant is the one and how desolate the other, I leave it to God.” This then is the rule. O my God, Thou knowest I have not served Thee well in past life, because creatures have perpetually led me astray. Henceforth I will look solely to this with Thy help. If they are hindrances, I will give them up and set myself free. I will not be the slave of any created thing. My life shall be for God. No created thing shall come between Him and me. When He asks me for the dearest, He shall have it. I will be led to perfection by the things that surround me, that so at last I may come and see my God, and read His divine intentions and the power He confided to me, in giving His creatures that I might use them for His glory and the salvation of my soul.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE SIN OF THE ANGELS.

THE fruit of this meditation should be a sense of shame and confusion, when we see so many lost eternally for one sin, and reflect that we have offended Almighty God many times.

Consider how the angels fell. God created them in a state of grace, He made them partakers of His Divine Nature and gave them a right to call themselves His children, and in consequence to see Him and be with Him for all eternity. But He created them in a state of probation. Had He placed them at once in heaven, they would have had no choice but to praise, reverence and serve Him, but He would not have a compulsory service. He would have His children serve Him of their own free will ; therefore it was in their power to refuse this service. It will be said of every soul in heaven that it is there of its own free choice and by its preference of God.

The rebellious angels refused to use their freedom in the service of God ; pride was the sin into which they fell. Pride consists in taking a higher position than that which belongs to us ; humility is taking our right place. When God ceases to hold His right place, and I mine, then there is pride. God is

supreme and has absolute dominion over me ; pride is unreasonable, inasmuch as it asserts independence of God.

The angels rebel and are at once transformed. They lose that bright robe of grace which was theirs, and the loss is irrevocable. Grace was a free gift ; they had no right to it, and they can never regain it. God could have extended their time of probation, but He did not so will ; they threw away grace, and malice took its place. What was the occasion of their sin we do not exactly know ; perhaps their minds rested on the beauty of their own grand nature, and they wished to be independent of God. Who can be independent of God ? God can never cease to be God. We may lose grace, but so long as our time of probation on earth lasts, we may recover it ; it was not so with the angels, their loss was final, perhaps because of the clearer light and brighter intelligence with which they were endowed. Their state was very different from ours in our prison house. They were only capable of *spiritual* sin : they with their clear spiritual vision chose deliberately to offend God—how rash their malice was, compared to ours !

But now let us compare our sins, not with those of the angels, but with those of our fellow-men. We have been placed in the full light of the revelation of Almighty God, we know who God is. Is there not therefore a degree of perversity in our will, which there is not in thousands of others ? If those who have most light offend most, if the servant who knows his master's will and does it not shall be beaten with many stripes, must I not when comparing my life with

that of others who have not had my light and safeguards be filled with shame and confusion? The punishment of the angels was eternal; God proportioned their punishment to the degree of malice in their sin; when once they fell, their probation was over. This gives me some idea of what sin is; they had committed a mortal sin, one single sin, and it was thus punished! A hell was created for it with power to torment beings perfectly spiritual, and this was a punishment measured by a just God of infinite mercy. We cannot so much say that God inflicted it on them, as that they brought it on themselves by deliberately choosing to offend God. And I, if I have ever committed a mortal sin, might be where they are, and why am I not? Because Christ died for me. When He saw us perverting our will, misusing our gifts, turning them against the God who gave them, He came to redeem us by dying on the Cross. There, at the foot of the Cross our meditation must end. What can I do for Him who hangs nailed to the Cross for love of me? The angels were not redeemed; they were not ungrateful to a Redeemer; have I not been ungrateful? What can I give Him now to make reparation for my ingratitude? What can I do in the future? I must make my colloquy with Him, and look to Him for an answer. I come before my Lord conscious of my pride and foolish ingratitude in the past, and ask Him to touch my heart and give me contrition such as I never had before, that seeing what He has done for me I may be filled with so true a sorrow that I may not go away, forget and sin again.

SECOND DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE SIN OF ADAM.

THE fruit we are to ask for in this meditation is that God may impart to us shame and confusion for past sins. We are not now to look at our present state, but at our past—what we have done against God. Even though my sins have been repented of, and I know I am in a state of grace, yet I can make this meditation on what I have been. Sin is never really obliterated, though it may be forgiven. There it remains, an outrage against the Majesty of God. To consider the way in which God has dealt with one single sin should produce in me a greater shame and sorrow for my many sins, and cause me to appreciate aright the evil of sin.

FIRST PRELUDE.—That poor woman who has been lately condemned to death for a murder : her state before her trial, in prison, when she had to come out and stand at the bar with witnesses coming up and giving evidence against her. That is the shame I ought to entertain. If detected in a little thing, how ashamed I am. What then will be my feelings, when all my sins are brought out clear and plain?

SECOND PRELUDE.—That God will bestow on me the grace to have this interior sense of shame at having offended Him.

Paradise was a foretaste of Heaven. Heaven is a place prepared by God in His infinite power for the eternal enjoyment of His creatures. Adam and Eve were placed in Paradise with everything that could test their fidelity. God endowed them magnificently. Man has sometimes such wonderful capacity even in his wounded nature, but theirs was intact. In the moment of their creation they were gifted with sanctifying grace. He bestowed on them that to which they had no natural claim—Himself. Now they were to live in anticipation of His presence. One single command He gave them ; and the tempter was allowed to approach them. This is the law of our probation. God's Will is that the final rewards should be for real fidelity. One subtler than we are is to be allowed to come and make his suggestions, God, the loving Father, desiring that by this temptation His glory should be increased. There is to be no time when we are to say, Now I may think of what I like.

What are the tempter's suggestions to Eve? He begins by finding fault with God ; he insinuates that God has done something that He should not have done. If you eat of that tree you will be no longer poor dependent creatures. You won't die. God takes something away to which you have a right. We too say, "If I had not this cross, how much better I could serve Him ! I want to be free, not shackled, master of my own actions ; I would follow my own will, throw off His yoke, be free and independent."

We have no reason for thinking that the fruit of

that tree conveyed any special knowledge except that of sin. The devil suggests to Eve she should try it, and rouses one of the most dangerous sentiments of our nature—curiosity. Oh if we could but shut away the knowledge of evil! Know as little of evil as you can. Be sure there is nothing like innocence. Let children grow up in ignorance of the existence of all kinds of evil. We may cease to value grace as it deserves, and have to learn its value by its loss. We may undervalue the force of temptation. When we rely on ourselves, God makes us feel our helplessness. He would sooner we committed other sins than indulge in pride. Self-confidence is sure to be fatal.

We must not be surprised when we have suggestions made to us from without, with an appearance of good, with all the cunning of the devil, who appears to us as a friend. Beware of entering into colloquy with him. At once we must turn to God, and make an act of love then and there. Let the devil serve as a reminder to turn to God; let him be defeated by a poor creature who knew what to do. The devil loves to begin a long way off. An apple—only an apple! Eve looked at it and was drawn towards it—eternal salvation hanging on that! In itself it would only be a venial sin, but a precept given by God as a test of obedience changes the character of an act. The precept is the test of submission—whether they would be creatures and acknowledge God as their Creator. They do what God has prohibited, and are guilty of the sin of disobedience. This is the example of the foundation we were considering yesterday—our position in regard

to God. We are not free to choose for ourselves. God never says, "That is My law; if you like to break it you may, but you must take the consequences." Divine laws are not like penal laws, enacted by the state. There is no alternative. We are essentially God's subjects. He will be obeyed. If we disobey, the cost is not only punishment, but loss of His divine friendship and severance from Him.

God visits Adam and Eve, and they betray their guilt. He passes sentence so leniently, so lovingly. Original sin has been introduced. Adam's posterity are not the friends of God; they are born with a forfeiture on them, by rights noble, but with their blood attainted. A life of penance is before Adam and Eve before they can die, to enable them to recover what they had lost. Grace is restored to them by the first act of contrition and faith that they make, but a first fault gives a proneness to a second. This act of disobedience tends to another. Contempt of the law of God, a spirit of independence, is imbedded in their nature, having to be conquered slowly. They see the death of Abel and evil increasing in the world. So we must remember what we have done. I am a child of theirs, too ready to imitate them and take up a proud independent position. I have chosen for myself; how often have I eaten the forbidden fruit. I must examine a sin calmly and quietly, and turn to myself and say, "That I have done again and again—those dispositions have been mine." I want to see how bad a thing sin is, and to learn in retreat to defend myself against every beginning of sin.

Three colloquies are to end this meditation. First to our Lady, asking :

1. That I may have an interior knowledge of the extreme evil of sin, so that I may obtain that contrition which will not only set me free from sin, but guard me against it in future.

2. That henceforth my use of creatures may be in accordance with that end for which I was made, having seen the bad use I have made of them in the past.

3. That I may know what worldliness is, and hate it and escape the danger of being led by it into sin.

In the second colloquy make the same three petitions to our Lord as man.

In the third to the Eternal Father, the Father of our Lord, my Father.

SPIRITUAL READING, *second day*—Imitation of Christ, I. 21 ; III. 14.

PATRON—St. Ignatius.

EXAMEN—Particular Examen.

C O N F E R E N C E .

SECOND DAY.

[3 P.M.]

O N M E D I T A T I O N .

OUR meditations are to be made in a spirit of great humility to-day, so that we may learn how we have offended. God's terms are so easy that we have been easy with ourselves : now we are to put things into their proper state ; try and prepare well for confession and communion that we may make a new start.

We went through the preparation for meditation in our conference yesterday—our rising in the morning, and how we are to adopt St. Ignatius's plan of naming to ourselves the time the night before. The chances are we shall be in a different mood in the morning : it requires a strong will that it should be carried out. All through life make your resolutions as clear and definite as you can. In a time of calmness it is useful to deliberate beforehand on what we ought to do as to amusements, food, etc., and never change without equal deliberation. That is fidelity.

The day has to begin with an act of mortification. If I get up thinking that God wants me to get up at this time, it is an act of submission to Him. He gave me the grace to make the resolve : if I break it,

it is making light of Him. Do it because it is the Will of God, and then *how well the day has begun!* If we allow ourselves five or ten minutes extra in bed, what good does it do? In a small way nothing is more uncomfortable than the consciousness of not having got up in time. Our temper is always ruffled when we have interior remorse. If you have not done all this preparatory part there is no reason to blame your head as causing your distractions. Then we begin our prayer. All sorts of thoughts come in and take possession of our minds. What is wanted is sufficient strength of will to shut the door upon them. Perhaps one reason why we can't do this is that, during the time before, we don't watch over our thoughts and are not penetrated with the consciousness that we have something great to do. We are to have an audience. If Leo XIII. were about to receive us, our minds would be full of it and we should hardly notice surroundings. We should have thought of what we had to say, of our petition, etc., and that is the only natural way of acting when anything unusual is going to occur. This represents the sort of feeling we should have before meditation. I am to receive God's instruction, I am to have His grace and light poured in upon me.

Arriving at the church—still a few paces off,—I put myself in the Presence of God and take holy water (sacramentals do away with guilt) and genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. I make an act of faith and see our Lord present, who is the witness of what I am going to do. He sees into my heart. I see Him and He sees me. This is a good act to

make before other things as well as before meditation. How much depends on the beginning ! If we always began each action well, we shouldn't find the Angelus, coming in the middle of it, perhaps, difficult to attend to,—or our grace at meals—that hasty sign of the cross coming may be in the middle of a sentence. Try and let your grace be secured.

Now we have brought ourselves on our knees. We have made our preparatory prayer containing sentiments of humility, contrition, adoration and supplication for help. This meditation is a creature to help me to praise, revere and serve God. In the first prelude make your composition of place as though you were there, hearing and seeing. If my subject, for example, is from St. John's gospel, it is not difficult for me to see him writing it, and ask what is meant. See that your subject is manageable. People try things that are too big. If I were to make a meditation on the Precious Blood, on the Immaculate Conception or on the Crucifixion, I could not manage it, because it is too big. I want something more handy. This is the meaning of the questions on your papers—"Who? What? Why? How?"* Take one or two of these. For example, our Lord at the well. Who? How? Not merely the Son of God, but *weary*. He had been doing a long day's work and fasting, but He does not betray this in the way in which He talks. These two thoughts are enough—I have a lesson for myself. If *I* am ill and tired, I treat people differently, not like my Lord. The memory has

* See page 142.

presented the subject, and the understanding reasons on it.

Then there comes the question : 1. "With what fruit?" Our Lord said this to me, what good has it been to me? Has it made any difference in what I have done hitherto? 2. "With what love did our Lord do that?" The raising of Lazarus, *e.g.*—what was the love of the Heart of Jesus for him? or when He forgave the penitent thief, what did He feel? what was He longing for? When He raised Lazarus, what did He feel for me? He thought of the time when I should meditate on it and the love that I was to get from it. Thus are we helped to look beneath the surface and penetrate into the Sacred Heart : no fear when we have done that but that our hearts will be set to work! We are to go to meditation as a prayer, not as a study. When we can see the subject as something that affects ourselves on this very day, our hearts will rise and *we shall pray.*

Is not this why our plans have been forgotten, why God has been wanting more and not getting it? We with longings after better things are grovelling still—and why? Because we have not learned to pray. We can say prayer after prayer and not have spoken to God at all.

SECOND DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

HELL.

PRAY to make this meditation well, because it is one from which we shrink. Can it be right to banish the thought of it from our minds? This is one of the creatures which are to help us. It is not meant to create in us *servile* fear—a filial fear, yes. In the representation of hell we are to see God as our Father. I need the thought of hell as a protection. God knew that when He revealed it to me.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our guardian angel opens the view of hell to us.

SECOND PRELUDE.—A prayer that if ever through tepidity I should be in danger of offending God, I may be restrained by the knowledge of what hell is.

FIRST POINT. Hell is a place of torments, made for devils: the body of no one can be there as yet: spirits, souls are suffering in that fire. God made that fire for that which is spiritual. The pain of sense will be increased when the body comes. It will be a universal pain, something quite beyond our experience. We are capable of great pain here: the pain of hell will go on without break, cessation or rest. How we crave for *rest* from pain here! No such thing as sleep or intermission in hell: it is continuous,

eternal; there is nothing to look forward to. Soul and body will continue endlessly to suffer. The suffering is proportioned to the sin. Sin is a preference of self to God. In proportion to the malice of aversion from God will be the suffering.

SECOND. Then there is the pain of loss. All have the same loss inasmuch as they all lose the same God, Who was to be the final happiness of each, but the more knowledge there was of God the worse is the sin. There must be knowledge and deliberation. Venial sin is a conversion to the creature, but no aversion from the Creator, so the grace of God is not taken away. The loss of God is different to different people in proportion as they know more of Him. The unbaptised infant has had no malice in not having grace: it has loss, but not pain. Here we don't see God, and people can be happy without Him; but that is an impossibility when He has once been known and when there has been malice in rejecting Him. He will show Himself as the final Beatitude. To the lost He will make Himself known in a different manner from that in which He is revealed to the blessed in heaven. That lost soul will *yearn* for the possession of a great good it will *never* have. It will really know the good it has forfeited for ever. One will know more than another. People say, what is the use of a mission? Souls are brought to confession, but very likely they relapse and fall into sin again. Yes, but all the past is obliterated by a good confession. All the mortal sin is forgiven and never revives. If that soul is ultimately lost, yet all those sins will not have to be punished. Look

what is involved in that pardon ! It is the reverse with grace. Grace goes on accumulating till we lose it by mortal sin, and *then* an act of contrition will restore it.

Look at the condemned soul as it surveys its life. Conceive its remorse. It is condemned purely through its own fault. Vanities have disappeared, deceptions have come to an end. No such thing now as deceiving itself or undervaluing God. The loss will be of our own doing. We can remember the graces—how we spurned them. We shall have the sense of shame. We shall know now that it was not worth our while to have spent our life as we did. I went my own way. I might have turned to God ; it was my own fault. There is no one there who thinks God unjust, or who does not know how long-suffering and merciful God was. To see that is a bitter part of the pain of hell.

THIRD. Again, hell consists of the gathering together of all the worst, the very worst. What should we think of even one such as a companion. It is a land of tyranny where no order reigns and where God is obliged to withdraw the care of His Providence. No good ever got there, no such feeling as charity. There are people like the executioners of Jesus Christ and those who delighted in gladiators. An unrepented mortal sin of one very refined, shrinking from coarseness, will cast him into that company.

Sin, then, is the only thing we have to fear : poverty, pain, dishonour do not signify. It doesn't matter what the sin is like or what the sinner. I see a person like myself cut off, punished exactly for what I have done. It might have been so with me.

St. Teresa saw her place in hell—the place prepared for her if she still continued in the life she was leading. She never did commit a mortal sin, but it would have come to that had she not changed her life. It does concern me if I am not in mortal sin, because venial sin may easily lead me to mortal sin. The love of God is cold within me compared to what it should be : if I get colder, I shall fall. And so we arrive at God's fatherly goodness. Why should He have revealed hell? It needed no revelation to tell us He would punish sin. It was not necessary He should reveal hell : it was an act of condescension, of compassion. He saw I stood in need of that safeguard ; I must thank him for having made it known to me, for having protected me against myself. It is like capital punishment. Nothing but the fear of death will keep people from murder. God has revealed hell in the same way as a peculiar condescension to our baseness. Our will is so weak, so contemptible, we owe Him thanksgiving for having provided us a remedy. We do want that protection. Let us look on God as our Father. Even if we have not fallen into mortal sin, we have been on the high road to it, and it is His mercy alone which has preserved us. I am here and still have time and the sacraments, and can avail myself of the passion of my God. If I don't meditate on hell, how can I ever thank Him enough? We must have the fear of children who are afraid of offending a very loving father. Hell will help us as well as any other creature to acquire this filial love and fear.

Conclude with acts of gratitude and love.

SECOND DAY.

[8-30 P.M.]

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

THIS meditation will help us to regulate our actions, which at the Particular Judgment will all be tried in the scales of God's justice.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The room in which we generally sleep and shall probably die may be the tribunal where the Judge will sit. We will place ourselves in that room, seeing there the arrangements that have been made for the last sacraments.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Petition for grace so to anticipate my judgment now that when my Lord comes as my Judge I may go with joy to meet Him.

Who is my Judge? What is the Judgment? What is the sentence that will be passed? We must meditate on these things as on things that are *certainly coming* and which we shall do well to anticipate. If we knew we were to be summoned before a court of justice, we should be careful to prepare beforehand. We should not leave anything so momentous to the accident of the hour. Now we know positively that we shall be called to judgment, we know precisely the way we shall be judged and also the character of our Judge. Our Judge will be our Lord Jesus Christ, no longer as the Babe of

Bethlehem, or as He was in His active life, healing the sick, consoling the sorrowful, speaking words of comfort and of mercy, or as He gives Himself to us now under the sacramental veils, but under a new aspect—one of perfect justice. The day of mercy will be over, He will take us as He finds us. There is an old tradition, which St. Justinian speaks of in the first century, that our Lord left this saying with His Apostles, “As I find you, I will judge you.” We have a Judge from Whom we cannot escape,—One Who knows all things, the whole and exact details of our life. He is omnipotent and can execute His own sentence. He is supreme: from His tribunal there is no appeal; there will be no suspension of judgment, He will begin and complete His judgment on us, and it will be one of extreme justice.

Who is to be there? I myself am to stand before Him on my trial, and on either hand there will be an accuser and an advocate—the devil who has followed me about and the angel who has always been at my side. Witnesses will be summoned to give their testimony, the people I have been in contact with through my life. The tempter can say much, angel after angel can come up and tell a tale; the sins of my *whole* life and the good deeds of my whole life will be disclosed, and judgment will be passed on the good and evil. What exactly is to be my eternal reward, that as well as the punishment is to be decided. The angels of those I have led into sin will come to give their testimony, and the angels of those to whom I have done good. Often whilst I was going in and out amongst men, I was forgetful of the company of

angels, of those invisible, loving eyes who were watching me and hanging on the words that fell from my lips, noting the good or evil effect they produced : never for one moment have I been without a witness, nothing in my life will have been forgotten. Our Divine Redeemer will be the Judge ; the account He will take will be rigorously exact ; all the good and bad in my life will be taken into consideration, the way in which I did what I did as well as the actions themselves—for instance, I shall be asked not only, Did you make a retreat ? but, What did it do for you ? Thus everything will be weighed in the scales of justice ; we shall not be able to make excuses, our life will tell its own tale. *I* shall stand face to face with my Lord—He will ask *me*, “What use did *you* make of My Passion ?” He will go through everything minutely—“What use did you make of that grace ? What of that temptation ?” Thoughts, words, actions, He will scrutinize them all. The Judge Himself has declared that for every idle word we shall have to give an account. That Judge has told us He is capable of inexorable severity—“Bind him hand and foot and cast him into exterior darkness ;”—it is He Himself who used these words of one who had come to the marriage feast without having on the wedding garment. The day of mercy will be over then. Mercy lasts all through this life, but once life has ended, justice begins—justice in rewarding, justice in punishing. God’s sentence will be one of infinite justice ; He has promised to reward with eternal life those who die in a state of grace, and to punish with eternal loss those who die in mortal sin.

If we are in doubt as to whether we have committed a sin or not, we can always settle the question by asking ourselves, "Did I fully and deliberately consent?" for without knowledge and consent there can be no mortal sin: therefore it is always possible for us to have a moral certainty as to whether we are in a state of grace or not. God has made the terms of forgiveness so easy, we have but to go with contrition and confess our sin and we have His word—"Whose sins you shall remit, they are remitted." Therefore we can prepare now for judgment.

Judgment will also be pronounced with regard to grace, its use and misuse; it is well to look to this now, to beg for the grace of true contrition and to make expiation as far as we can for the past. At the Judgment we shall see everything as God sees it; all will be made clear to us. God will unfold before us the dispensation of His Divine Providence—all the things which at the time seemed to us such complications, the trials which appeared inexplicable;—He will show us what they meant. If ever it seemed as if God was hard, we shall then see He was a loving Father.

How can we prepare for our judgment? By asking of ourselves now, "What does my conscience say?" In the tribunal of penance the same Judge is sitting listening to the criminals as they condemn themselves; if they confess their sins now with sorrow and contrition, if they examine their conscience day by day, always renewing their compunction—what an anticipation this would be of the judgment! When they appear before their Divine Redeemer, what a

consolation for them to say, " My Lord, I have come to You before and have confessed my guilt with deep contrition " !

Again, we can prepare for judgment by learning to be familiar with our Judge. He allows us to be intimate with His Sacred Heart and invites us to learn His feelings towards us. We can bribe our Judge, we can win Him to our side in this life, *now* we can make Him our friend. If in life I have been familiar with Him, if everything dear to Him has been dear to me, if I have brought others to Him, what an audience He will give me !

He then who is to judge me is He who died for me on the Cross, and in judging me will love me as He loved me then, as He loves me now. I will make Him a return of love, and then when I kneel before Him to have my fate sealed for eternity and look up for the first time into His Sacred Face, there will be a smile on it ; and that smile—would it not be a sufficient reward even without a heaven in store for us to see His smile and to hear Him say, " Dear child, I am satisfied " ? What is there worth living for but this ? Shall we not so spend our lives that it may be a joy to our Divine Redeemer to find we have made good use of the graces for which He paid so great a price.

THIRD DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

PRAYER.—That I may so present before myself now that judgment, that in this life I may set in due order my thoughts, words and actions.

Imagine the end of the world, fire destroying everything—libraries, pictures, palaces, churches. Listen to the crackling and roaring of the flames and the falling of ruins. Then afterwards comes silence and stillness. “It is appointed unto ~~all~~ to die, and after that the judgment.” The punishment of death is to rest upon each one. The world will go on to the last just as it has done. Indifference will remain. “Where are the signs of His coming?” This world with which people are so satisfied is to come to an end. It is to come to an end also for those who have joined in St. Stanislaus’ cry, “I am not made for things temporal, but for things eternal.”

The general resurrection takes place. Souls are summoned from Heaven and Hell and Purgatory, to be re-united to bodies coming to life again—such different bodies, some to be united to souls which have been suffering for long. These died in grace—those in mortal sin. When the glorified soul enters into its body, it imparts its happiness to that body. Some

souls come from Purgatory. Purgatory is one of those creatures made for the glory of God. Ah! what should we do without Purgatory? When I hear from my Lord I am saved, I shall go with leaps of joy to Purgatory. Could I wish to see my God with stains upon me? There I shall be safe and every instant more prepared for His sacred presence. How I shall love Purgatory, knowing that I am being prepared for God in God's own way, and how I shall long after Him! The thought of Purgatory is always dear to me. My God will not cast me from Him, though I die so unfit for His immediate presence.

Purgatory will have come to an end at the general judgment. The victory will be won; we shall rise with our eternal fate known. The day of judgment is not to decide upon the fate of each individual; it is for another purpose. All will be together, some on the right hand of our Lord and some on the left. There will be anguish amongst the lost, and joy amidst the saved, as they welcome the souls from Purgatory. It is a time of great expectation; the Majesty of God is to appear, the Sacred Humanity in divinest glory. Every knee shall bow, all creation, saints and angels, lost and devils. God is to show Himself to be God, infinitely just and infinitely merciful. He will manifest the way in which souls have worked with or against the grace of God, how they have been saved, how lost. It is to be a *vindication of God*. This is the reason of the general judgment.

The angels bring forth the instruments of the

Passion. The cross of our Lord is seen in the heavens. There will be those to whom it has been a stumbling-block. They bore repiningly the cross that was laid upon them. These who have loved the cross, who have borne it generously and bravely because their Lord bore it, how they will love it! There is a throne by that of Jesus, the throne of our Blessed Lady; there are the thrones of the Apostles, St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph. Those for whom Mary has had so maternal a love, for whom she did not grudge her Son, those for whom her prayers were offered,—ungrateful children who would not have recourse to her—then they will know her! Those who have known the power of their mother's prayers, how their hearts will bound when they see her! Yet a little while and they will be with her, and never parted from her more.

Look at the King enthroned, His wounds shining like the sun. They who pierced Him shall see Him; and who are they that have not pierced Him? There will be those who will cry for anguish at the wounds He bore for them, who are lost in spite of the work God has condescended to do. And those who are saved—they are saved through Him, they owe Him all; without Him where would they have been? What could they have done? His love made Him bear for them the humiliation. Now they can love Him as He deserves to be loved. They know now what it is they owe Him.

And now the life of each one in minute detail is to be made known. God will reveal the life of each. I shall not be lost in the multitude. His divine

conduct with each soul shall be manifested, and all alike shall know how good He has been ; the vacillations, the turns to good, the launching out to evil, the downward course, or how a soul was raised, how it corresponded with grace, its trials, its courage, how it rose higher and higher, how it had greater trials and greater graces, what it cost to subdue itself, the pains of self-victory, how it landed safe at last upon the eternal shore.

All will be gathered there from different ages and countries, pagan and Christian. Each soul will have to show what use it made of its liberty. To each God has been a Father ; He has done His part ; all the evil has come from a perverse and wicked will ; there is not one soul He would not have saved. Attention will be turned on *my* life ; the most secret things will be known, all that I saw, all that I have done, will be manifest before the world. But *if* by God's grace—I will not put it hypothetically—*when* I am there on His right hand, and all are looking to see what I did, and my utter baseness is exposed, then all those sins of mine will bring glory to my God. I shall show what my Redeemer has done ; *out of materials so vile as those He has made a Saint for Heaven.* For surely there has been enough to show the efficacy of my Saviour's Blood in that it could make one such as I was fit to be the companion of my Lord to all eternity. To have been made one with Him, to have cared only for what He cared, to have reproduced His life in mine, to have shown forth the power of the grace He purchased, —that will be the return I may make, to show Him

some fruit of His Passion, to show before angels and men something done for His glory.

That day will have an end. When all that has ever happened has been made present with the greatest minuteness, giving a new revelation of how good God has been, then He will rise and pass into Heaven, and the sight of Him will die away from the eyes of those who are *never* to see Him more ; their perverted wills refusing to love Him, their wills confirmed in evil, hating the good, but hating themselves for hating it. His mother, the saints and angels all follow Him, and each one of those who were gathered there on His right hand. The great gates are thrown open, and bright light streams forth, and the lost see it from afar, and with a wailing cry of despair they are hurried away by the devils into the prison-house, from whence they will never come forth. "Go, ye cursed of My Father." They have learnt now Who that Father is, how there is *no one* He has not loved. They are abandoned by Him from Whom all good things come, He ratifying the sentence they have pronounced on themselves, the lot they have chosen. And why have they chosen it? What have they preferred to God? What have they thought preferable to that Heaven above? These who have been ungrateful, independent, who have come forth from a long probation so full of merciful remedies, finally to be separated from their God, what have they chosen in His stead?

And the just—what will their crosses seem when they have heard the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"? How was it possible my heart could

have been so hard? He has showered on me His love, and I knew Him not. "Come"—to be the sharer of His benediction for all eternity. His occupation is to make His children happy. Oh, bid me come to Thee! To have seen Him in His glory and then for Him to say "Come"! What would I not leave to come? What could I have been dreaming of to think there was anything desirable but to hear that word "Come"?

Then let me think of this life to which I have to return. An effort has to be made that it may be a new life, and that I may not be ashamed of it when I stand before His judgment seat. I must secure first that those sins shall be a glory to Him, a declaration of His mercy; and then that I may do what He proposes, that I may correspond with His graces and rise to that degree of perfection He has destined for me.

If I had to choose my judge, whom else would I choose but my Lord?

SPIRITUAL READING, *third day*.—Imitation of Christ, III., 23, 24, 25.

PATRON—S. Mary Magdalene.

EXAMEN — Confessions — sincerity, humility, fruitfulness.
Communions—desire, profit.

CONFERENCE.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON MEDITATION (*continued.*)

THE meditation paper you have been given* is to serve as a guide when you make the "reflection" on your meditation. The first of the subjects under the head of "Understanding" is "Practical conclusion." We want to come to this, as meditation is a prayer influencing our present day. For example, in yesterday's consideration we took our Lord with the woman of Samaria; He, weary and hungry, yet devoting Himself to the least circumstances of the person to whom He was speaking. My *conclusion* from this is, I will take care to-day not to allow any state I may be in to influence me in my conversation with others. Some one is coming with whom I am often impatient; then I will imitate my Lord. I fortify myself with *motives*—several are put down on the meditation paper to choose from. I am going to teach a troublesome child. I am applying the thought of our Lord with that woman, interesting Himself in her circumstances as though He were not weary; as *He* did this, *I* will be like Him and try to

* See Page 142.

enter into the child's mind. Things that are not supported by motives don't last. Our religion is reasonable; resolutions that are not founded on reason don't last. The first motive suggested on your paper is that it is "just." Is it not "just" that I should imitate my Lord? I am a Christian. What would my Christianity be if I am not like Christ? If my Lord is my model, justice requires me to be considerate, because otherwise I must give up being a Christian. This is a strong motive. Or, again, I love my Lord and I like to follow Him. "Delightful." That is the second motive. I have pleasure in bearing a cross; who does not know the delight of making a sacrifice when love animates us? "Useful"—another motive. To-day it is only the child, but by-and-by there will be other things necessary to be done, for which I must control myself, and this is useful practice. Or I want a conversion, I will offer it for that. Or, if I do this for God, what will He do for me?

"What have I done hitherto?" Lost my temper. "What shall I do henceforward?" For the next fortnight I will devote myself to this and do it better and better. "Obstacles." What is there to prevent me from improving? I have been excusing myself. Why have I not amended? Through want of forethought perhaps. I have not made use of the proper means. I have to secure myself that I may think beforehand. I shall have to go back to this meditation—perhaps make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament or the crucifix, just before I begin my teaching. How shall I make sure of it? I will

put the book I am going to teach from on the prie-dieu. When I get there, I shall remember why I have come. If you follow a method of this sort, what you have to do and avoid comes clearly before you.

“Will” is the next head. It is the will that prays and makes affections all through the meditation; e.g., an act of *faith* that our Lord was sitting by the well, weary. Here is one of the theological virtues at work, and an excellent way of fixing the subject in your mind. *Adore* Him because He begins at once to save souls. Make acts of *admiration, delight, wonder*. Our Lord is doing something intensely grand, though small outwardly. How unlike Him I am! Awaken in yourself a sense of humiliation and sorrow, with a purpose of amendment. Renew your resolution, make an offering of it to our Lord. Our Lord has done this for me, of course I can do something for Him. He shows His love not only to me but to the child; and I can be kind to the child for His sake. In this sort of way affections are at work. It is a mistake to think prayer only means petition. Every act of humility, thanksgiving, etc., is prayer.

You have made your resolution, and specified the means you are to make use of to keep it. “I will take the book from which I am going to teach to my prie-dieu, and recommend my resolution.” You may make a direct colloquy then with our Lord. “May I speak to You, O Lord, about myself? Will You keep close to me to-day? I can’t do what I have to do without You. Keep near me that I may

refer to You." The colloquy should be as when a friend speaks to his friend.

When you find meditation getting dry, try spiritual mendicity. Go to the persons in your meditation and ask an alms. Ask the Apostles, St. Joseph, St. Mary Magdalene, any of the saints connected with the subject of your prayer,—What have you got for me to-day? and in a short time you will find something comes, and then a prayer—a useful prayer. If nothing should come, look at your paper, make acts of faith, sorrow, humility, etc. Never mind how dry they are; it is something done. Make an act of confidence. There is a special reason why I make my act of confidence to-day, because, etc. . . . There is nothing complicated, nothing difficult in this method. The important part is the easiest part: acts and colloquies can always be made. The first thing that moves you to make acts is enough as long as that lasts. If the mere sight of our Lord sitting by the well suffices, that is enough, provided you resolve to do something for Him.

Now we come to the "Reflection." Many make meditations, and very little comes of it. There is no practical improvement. And why? Because the meditations are forgotten. In time of retreat we keep going back upon them—why should we not do the same always? The Reflection is to make the meditation effective; it need not be made at once; you may take ten minutes after breakfast for the purpose. It consists of a little examen of conscience, according to the points. What was my conclusion? What were my motives? my affections? Faith,

sorrow, confidence, etc. I am not going to repeat the meditation ; I am only looking to see if I made it rightly. Was I careful to put away distraction before beginning ? Did I put myself in the presence of God ? Did I give the full time ? if not, there was want of fidelity, and I will give myself a penance—a good quiet quarter of an hour now. Add a little more than usual when restless and distracted ; this will show you how to overcome yourself. Spend the minutes, if you can't spend them in any other way, in saying the Name of Jesus. How can you spend them better ? Something will be sure to suggest itself. What have I got to carry away from my meditation ? “ In order that I may be like my Lord, and for the pleasure of being like Him, I am going to do this or that.” I want to keep that in my mind, and let it soak in. I must have a fixed time to revert to it, either in examen, or visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or some other specified occasion.

Put down in writing any thought you may have got.

THIRD DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

DEATH.

I WOULD not make my meditation on death terrifying ; that does no good. Let us look on death in a *friendly* manner. That is the most natural and simple way of regarding it. Remember those lines, —the most beautiful of all Father Faber's lines,

Death will have rainbows round it, seen
Through calm contrition's tears.

What are we to be afraid of, when we are in the hands of our Lord Who has died for us ?

FIRST PRELUDE.—The room in which we are going to die ; the table arranged for the Blessed Sacrament.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Prayer that as I am going to die, and so much is dependent on it, I may so meditate on death now, that I may be prepared when it comes.

A happy death ! what better thing can we ask for ? Need I be afraid of not having a happy death ? I shall die only once. I wish I could practise it, so as to get into the habit of dying, but I can't ; I can only die once. If I die in the state of grace, I am saved. Yes, but I want to die *in the best way*

possible, to be ushered into the presence of my Lord *prepared*. Illness—what a bad preparation that seems! I should like not to have much physical pain, nor too long an illness; if it is going to drag on, it will be a difficulty. I should get deadened and accustomed to it, and begin to think, where are the signs of His coming? I should like an illness that would not affect my mind, and I should like not to be kept waiting too long. Now the whole of this may be reversed. I may have pain that may incapacitate me, and the effort I have made to prepare may wear off. I may have two or three false alarms. That time of sickness looks the most extraordinary preparation for death; it seems an excuse for any amount of self-indulgence. How sad will it be if those last days and weeks, the pain and trouble of which might be a purgatory to me and give the final polish to my soul, are converted into a time of self-indulgence, so that the soul runs down!

How do you take little troubles, little pains? Do you do your best? If you are not feeling well, do you say, "I need not mind about my meditation, and I will put off my prayer and my Holy Communion"? or rather, "My Lord has sent me this, I will give Him my best, I will take the 'Our Father' and go through it quietly; it will be an effort, but my Lord will help me." It is not a bad test this, to see how we shall behave when we are really ill. Our life then is so upset that we don't know where to put our examen of conscience; we don't know how to manage, not only our spiritual duties, but the exercise of virtues. A little ill-temper we think must be excused. When

we get better, we find our self-control has gone, and we feel a little regret in knowing people won't think so much about us as they did when we were ill. How selfish we become ! Our friends ask us so much about our nights, meals, etc., till we come to look on our health as a matter of great importance. All this fuss fosters our self-love. And we are to get ourselves ready to go out of the world in this way ! Shall we not be at a great disadvantage, and had we not better get ready as well as we can now, and practise in little sicknesses, so as to be prepared when the last one comes ?

Suppose the end to be drawing near—oh ! if we knew it were the end, but we don't—but suppose there is every probability that life is drawing to a close ; ask yourself what you would do. I shall be told it is not likely I can recover. The priest will say, "It is time we make safe with the last Sacraments." I know what that means—the end is not far off. Oh that I may get all the graces ! The priest says, "Try and prepare yourself, my child. I shall be away three quarters of an hour ; get yourself ready." And I am left to myself. What use shall I make of that time ? I have to get myself ready for confession, which will help my communion and Extreme Unction and last blessing.

Prepare for confession. I have done that before. Yes, but am I satisfied with my past confessions ? Some people would fidget perhaps as to whether they had *said* enough, and precious time might be wasted in this way. No, that is not what God wants. He wants every mortal sin to be mentioned *once* ; He

wants a sin to be confessed and named by its name in such a way that it may be understood. Who am I that I should alter the terms God has prescribed for forgiveness? We won't waste time in unnecessary fidgets. My dispositions, how can I help seeing their defectiveness? Will my confession be bad through want of proper dispositions? Only in one case, if sacrilegious through purpose and a conscious want of proper dispositions. I am not responsible for not having contrition if I wished to have it. There is no need to repeat the confession unless certainly bad. One act of contrition will put everything right. I am going to take pains to make a better act of contrition than usual. I shall make my ordinary weekly confession, take one or two things of my past life, and accuse myself of all my sins in general. Then I shall think of my Lord, Who is coming, and make some special acts of love to Him, Who has facilitated my receiving Him now by dispensing with the fast of reverence. I shall make my confession in His presence. The priest is unlocking the tabernacle door for me. You are going through the streets to come to me. O dearest Lord, help me that I may make such an act of contrition as I have never made before. I must prepare for the anointing of those parts of my body on which His hands will rest for me to receive fresh graces. Oh how good God is! How He lavishes His graces on me!

Now the priest has come. In a simple way, in presence of the Blessed Sacrament—our Lord waiting for me,—I shall make my confession with more love and sorrow, and a more efficacious purpose never

again to offend Him than ever. Is He not here, wanting to save me? Am I going to distrust Him?

In this tranquil spirit I make my last confession. I accuse myself. I am a little more particular than heretofore, but there is not much difference—how can there be? How thankful I am I have not an evil past to set right! With a grateful heart to God I make my last confession and receive my penance. How light it is! an act of contrition, repeating the Name of Jesus—what little things, but, dipped in the Precious Blood, how valuable! and the absolving words are said which God Himself has promised shall be ratified in Heaven. “*Ecce Agnus Dei.*” What a new sense there is in those words now! Behold the Lamb who takes away *my* sins, the Lamb to Whom I owe it that I do not despair. “*Domine non sum dignus.*” I am not worthy to receive Thee. Was I ever worthy? How good Thou hast been to me! Was there ever so little required for the reception of so great a good? Lord, I cannot do without Thee! In unaccustomed words the priest communicates me. “Receive the Viaticum of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep thee from the malignant enemy, and bring thee to life everlasting.” What in the world could I prefer to this? What could I put in comparison with a communion at such a time?

Then there is to be another sacrament—a *Confiteor* again—and the priest says, “Child, close your eyes,” and his hand rests upon your eyes, and he touches your ears and your lips and your hands and feet. It is our Lord’s own hand touching you, making you whole. He made this sacrament—none can make a

sacrament but He—this sacrament which is to help me to fight my last enemies, this sacrament which detaches us from the world. One of its touching graces is that those who have clung to life are by it detached from life and made ready to die. They have felt death so hard before, and now He has come and soothed it all, and made it so easy that when the priest asks, “Will you make this sacrifice of your life?” they can look up eagerly and say, “Yes.” Oh the beautiful sacraments !

Then come the last blessing and the plenary indulgence. The satisfactions of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, those which would have been theirs had they needed them, are placed at our disposal in unstinted measure. “Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” In proportion to the disposition of the soul these satisfactions are made its own. If then I am in the condition to gain the plenary indulgence, I am in the position of the newly-baptised, and no purgatory is due to me. But it is not easy to gain a plenary indulgence ; all is not often gained through want of the due dispositions. Am I not to prepare myself for gaining it through my whole life ? Let me try to put myself into those dispositions and do away with all attachment to venial sin. Always at Holy Communion I will try to detach myself entirely from all that may offend God.

Now death is coming. I grow conscious of it ; there is no mistake, I have a different feeling from what I have ever had before. My interior acts—I shall turn to them now—acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition—

contrition in the beginning, in the middle, in the end. Oh that I should have offended Him ! My God, I am so sorry.—Acts of humility.—If unworthy to receive Thee sacramentally, how unfit to come into Thy presence ! I have misused such graces, sinned against such lights. O my God, I trust Thee with my whole heart.—An act of confidence and another act of confidence and another and another and another, till I can make no more, and then my Saviour's Name, the sweet Name of Jesus shall be my act of confidence—the Blood my Saviour shed for me. Mother Mary, help me now ; all my life have I said, “ Pray for me at the hour of death.” O holy patron saints, dear guardian angels, who gaze upon the Face of God, pray for me that I may die, giving my soul to God—with perfect conformity to His Divine Will. Take my soul, it is Thine, take it. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Thy Will be done.

And so *the end has come*. They are kneeling by me, suggesting acts I cannot make myself—dear names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, driving the enemy from me. Holy Name of Jesus ! when my lips can utter it no longer, my heart can breathe it forth. . . . It is getting dark . . . I can't see . . . I can hardly hear. I am sinking lower and lower . . . Getting off further and further . . . Those around me are more distant than they were—yes, but GOD IS NEARER. And yet a little . . . the struggle is over, and I shall gaze on His countenance. O Lord Jesus, come quickly . . . My eyes are opened and I see Him face to face. The shadows are gone and I am in the midst of eternal realities.

THIRD DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE PRODIGAL SON.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the house in which the Prodigal Son lived so happily, and then the distant country whither he went, and where he was reduced to feeding swine.

SECOND PRELUDE.—The prayer in the Mass for the feast of St. Aloysius—that we who have not followed him in the innocence of his life may imitate him in his penance. Having followed the Prodigal Son in his wanderings, may we follow him in his repentance.

“A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.’” How does the father treat this demand? He accedes to it and gives him a large portion. This is the way God deals with us; in a perfectly true sense we may say, This is *my* case. I can talk of *my* hand, *my* heart, etc., and in like manner of possessions; God has made them over to us by a deed of gift. The father desires that his son should never be able to say that he begrudged him anything; he wishes he should feel that he was *always* a loving father. This is what Almighty God does; the devil suggested to Eve tha

God was not all-loving, that He with-held a good from her, grudgingly ; whereas He is ever infinitely liberal and loving.

What does the Prodigal do with the property he receives? “Gathering all together, he went abroad into a far country.” He takes his father’s belongings and treats them as his own. Do we not do this with the gifts God has given us? All we possess—riches, talents, powers should be used, simply for His praise, reverence and service, and we take them away from Him and use them for ourselves ; and He, with that wonderful patience which belongs to Him, is looking on and sees what we are doing. The Prodigal takes his father’s gifts to a distant country in order to use his liberty with perfect freedom ; he desires to be independent and live only for himself ; the gifts are preferred to the giver, the love is bestowed on them to which his father has a claim. Thus he leaves home, mounted perhaps on a fine horse, with companions like himself and plenty of baggage and servants. He is in high spirits, this is what he has been pining for. His father is watching him ; he leaves home with a formal salute, and his father follows : is this the way the son he loves so dearly treats him? Surely he will look back, perhaps he will think better of it and return. So he watches and waits, and waits and watches, till the cavalcade in the distance becomes imperceptible, and then the father goes home, his son is lost, is dead.

Meanwhile the Prodigal and his companions are merrily pursuing their way ; at length they come to a village. “Would not this be a pleasant place to

halt?" one of them asks. "No, too near home, let us get farther away." How can we hide ourselves from God? Can we stop the voice of conscience? Can we dull its sting? And so the Prodigal goes on his way, till he comes to a distant land, where he can be troubled with no news from home, and may do as he likes. As time goes on, he has, however, to tax his ingenuity to find pleasures, for somehow pleasures, when they come, fall short of his expectations, and he is always hoping that the morrow will make up for the disappointment of the present day : but the morrow comes, and with it the bitterness again, and another and another day comes, and always brings the same sense of dissatisfaction ; the prospect which seemed so pleasant is not so in reality. He has formed a habit of forgetfulness of God, a habit of thinking only of himself, for when we forget God, we become habitually selfish, and only care for creatures in a spirit of selfishness : all love which is not based on supernatural motives is selfish. At last all his substance is wasted : all he brought from home is gone. At his worst, when he is reflecting what is to be done, a famine comes, and there is no one to whom he can turn for help ; those who were willing in his prosperous days to be his friends, now turn coldly away from him. He is poor and hungry, and seeks employment from one of the citizens of the country, who sends him to his farm to feed swine, forbidding him to touch the husks of which they eat, on which, in his hunger, he would gladly have fed. This comes from sin ; though the devil does not appear

to treat us thus, he does so in reality—he disguises himself as an angel of light, but all the while he is mocking and scorning us ; when once we have taken his bait and received the vile employment he has set us, then he shows himself a tyrant. Sin is a slavery ; the force of evil habits is so strong that it binds like a chain. We see to what vileness and misery this Prodigal is reduced, he, once the favourite of his father, now a swineherd and famished with hunger. What a useful thing is adversity ! How many it has brought home to God ! How many find out that He is their loving Father when they are in trouble ! “ The servants in my father’s house have bread to spare, whilst I perish with hunger.” The remembrance of his father’s love comes to him. “ I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee ; I am not now worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.” What perfect confidence and profound humility is in that prayer ! What more can we want ? Is it not a model for us ? Oh the misery of the deception when the devil says to us, “ You have gone too far, you are beyond the reach of mercy.” Be sure whenever diffidence or despair is suggested to you, and finds its way into your heart, that it is the work of the enemy. Think always of God’s goodness and mercy, and be certain as long as you live that He will welcome you home. There was deep humility in the Prodigal’s prayer. The knowledge of our baseness should make us humble and humility makes us trust God. Diffidence arises from pride, confidence from humility.

“ And rising, he came to his father.” Leaving at once the far country, he makes his way home. How defiled he is now ! As a poor swineherd, covered in rags, he now travels along the road which he had formerly travelled so gaily and happily. What sad memories are his ! What a tale he has to tell ! What a request to make ! As he goes, he keeps repeating to himself, “ Father, I have sinned and am not worthy to be called thy son.” It was an inspiration that came to him in his misery, and as he draws near home he fears he will be so full of shame that he will forget his confession, so he repeats it again and again.

His father was constantly saying, “ Surely he will come back again ;” but the reply of those around him was always, “ Oh no, he has gone too far ; you will never see him again.” Oh the difference between God and even the tenderest of His servants. The father has been accustomed to go to the place where he last saw his son, and day after day strain his eyes in hopes of seeing his son return, saying to himself, “ Perhaps he will come to-day.” And at last he sees a poor forlorn youth coming along the road ; he knows it is his son, and he hastens to meet him, and the poor boy casts himself on the ground and begins his confession, “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son ;” but before he has time to make the petition which seemed to him the only thing to ask now, “ Make me as one of thy hired servants,” the father’s arms are about his neck, and there is nothing but gladness and joy in that father’s

heart. And the father said to his servants, "Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead, and is come to life again, was lost and is found." The place, empty since the son had gone, should be filled, and all the past be forgiven and forgotten as only God can forgive and forget.

Look at this picture painted by our Divine Redeemer Himself to show us His love for sinners, and the welcome they would receive would they but come to Him : beautiful as it is, it falls short of the reality, for He has come not a little way only, but all the way from heaven, to bring back sinners who were feeding swine and satisfying their hunger with husks.

The Parable tells us of the elder brother who found fault with his father for the joy he manifests at the Prodigal's return. "Son, thou art always with me, and *all* that I have is *thine*," is the father's answer. "If I have not dealt with thee as I have with thy brother, who was lost and is found, it is not because thou art less dear to me, for *all* that I have is *thine*." God sometimes seems to deal hardly with those who have always lived innocently ; He often deprives them of the joy of His sensible presence and of consolation in prayer, but is it not enough for them to know that all He has is theirs ? He who gives them His son, will he not give them all things ? Are they not rich enough ?

Taking the Prodigal as a type of the sinner, and

the elder brother as a type of one who has never grievously offended God, we ask how it is our Lord should be so full of love to sinners, and apparently bestow less love on faithful souls? Because there is one thing He has to do, and that is, to show sinners that He loves them, and longs for their return; this is the divine exaggeration of His love. Does He not declare that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine who need no repentance? and again, that he would leave the ninety-nine sheep in the desert and seek the one that was lost until he found it, and rejoice more over that one than over the ninety-nine that had never left Him? What! Are saints and angels less pleasing to the Heart of Jesus than sinners like me? No, it is not so; innocence kept for God is far dearer to Him. The one dearest to the Sacred Heart was the virgin Apostle St. John. He loves these pure souls with an especial love; all that He has is theirs; but it is the poor sinner He must convince of His love, and who needs assuring of the welcome he will receive.

Look at the Prodigal in his father's house again, see the feast which is spread for him; and for me, poor sinner, the food of angels is prepared! The Prodigal is again in the midst of abundance, and will he now prefer the gifts to the giver? He has known by experience his father's love; will not that love prevail, and these gifts be used in his father's service? He is in company with those who are conscious what he has been and what he has done, and who do not treat him with the tenderness his father does; will he not say, "I have deserved it"?

Will there not be a meekness and humility ever afterwards in his treatment of others?

There is our lesson. To-morrow we are to receive the food of angels, which our Father has prepared for us. After participating in that sacred banquet, how shall we behave when we are thrown with others? How shall we take some mark of disrespect we may meet with? If we are not treated with consideration, shall we resent it? After having been so treated by our heavenly Father, after having received such a welcome, and been clothed in a new robe, can we be otherwise than meek and gentle, and forgiving and humble, with the example of the Sacred Heart before us?

FOURTH DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

WE have now finished the first week of the Exercises, and come to the second, for which the first was a preparation. It would be very little to have cleansed our souls; God wants much more. He has sent His Son to live with us, and show us the manner of life He would have us lead. We are to gaze on Him, and ask how we are conforming ourselves to Him, and love for Him will grow by knowing Him and will make imitation of Him delightful.

“The Kingdom of Christ” is a contemplation that

has wrought so much good in the world, that who can doubt God imparted it to St. Ignatius? For our composition of place we picture to ourselves the synagogues, cities and villages through which our Lord passed when on earth ; and the petition we make is "that we may not be deaf to the voice of His divine call, that we may have a will prepared to follow always His holy Will, a ready and willing heart." *What* He may ask we leave for the present ; we only ask now for the disposition, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth ; what wilt Thou have me to do ?"

FIRST POINT.—St. Ignatius gives us a parable of an earthly king. He imagines such a state of things as that all Christian princes were subject to one king—a king by divine appointment, and endowed with special qualities, charged by God to go forth and do battle against His enemies. God promises that His power shall be on the side of this king. He may take soldiers for their own good, but they are not wanted ; they are to be gainers and have a reward. The campaign is to be very difficult : all is to be suffered that is usual in warfare, except death. This then is the commission. The king makes his proclamation : "I shall go forth at your head. We will share exactly alike. What you go through I will too ; if my men go on foot, with burdens, if they are weary with marching and rest on the hard ground, have coarse fare, suffer hunger and thirst, so will I too. I will be in the thick of the fight, not in a safe place as generals usually are, but in front ; blows shall fall on me. Who will follow me and share in my warfare

and triumph?" There are two classes of men who accept. (St. Ignatius does not notice those who refuse altogether.) First, those who have common sense, who see on which side their own benefit lies; they look and see the terms that are offered and take it quietly. "The terms are so good, I can't refuse; there will be hardships, but I shan't get more than my share. I will do my duty and take my full share of toil and privation." Such men give their comrades no reason to complain: they don't shrink from a march or give their burdens to others. In hardships they are brave; they watch through the night, they do their duty in the battle and get their reward well-earned in the service of the King. Secondly, are there not some spirits who are endowed with even a higher nobility than these? The King's spirit is a spirit of generosity. He gives so much more than He need. I will be generous too. I will have the true old spirit of loyalty. Those who are touched by the very sound of generous and noble words—what will they say? Without reference to the future, not for the triumph, but only that I may serve my King while he is in hardship,—fighting, showing heroism, I will throw myself into His cause. His people shall be my people, His God mine. Such men will strive to be nearest to the King, to bear the heaviest burdens, and let the chief of the hardships fall on them and do deeds of valour in the thickest of the strife.

SECOND. Apply this parable to our Redeemer. Parables ever fall short of realities. St. Ignatius speaks of an earthly king, who asks his subjects to do

just as he did. O my Lord, You might speak so of Your terms, but what are the facts? What can we bear in comparison with what He bore? The weight of all has fallen on Him first; there is no pain for our hearts that has not first touched the Heart of Jesus. And the battle—it was He who went forth alone, conquering and to conquer, and it is a vanquished enemy we have to fight. He did it all; His sufferings were complete; yet St. Paul talks of that which is wanting in the sufferings of Christ that we have to fill. Yes, the sufferings of the Head are complete, but there are the sufferings of the members. Each member is to have his share—something in common with his Master's life—poverty, injuries, afflictions, contempt, some little portion of what belonged to Him is given to us. Of Thy poverty, Thy abandonment, O my Lord, give me something that will make me like Thee.

With what spirit do we obey His call? “Unless a man shall leave all things, he cannot be my disciple.” Think of the two classes of soldiers that we have been considering. Common sense would say, life without crosses is impossible. I have no control over trials, pains, losses, heart-aches,—come they will. I will take them bravely as they come, I will take them to my Lord. I will be conformed to Him, remembering the reward, the strength to be gained from Him, knowing that I am not alone, and that He will protect me. To be shrinking from crosses is useless: they must come; better make friends with them. Where the path of duty lies, there I go. This is common sense, but it is no light degree

of perfection, no contemptible virtue. Our Lord will reward it magnificently: the lowest soldier shall be rewarded in a way that surpasses all human thought.

Is there anything higher to which we may aspire? Yes, in all this we are looking to ourselves. Is it best to look to myself? How would it be were I to set all my thoughts on my King, and study how I can be more like Him, how I can please Him better? Can I not look at Him, have my eyes fixed on Him, make a change here and another there, shrink from nothing which will make me like Him? O Eternal Lord, I make my oblation, not bestowing anything, but asking that Thou wilt be pleased to take what I have to offer through Thy favour and *help*—without His help I could not make this offering, but would He have let me know about this path, if He had not wished me to walk along it? In the sight of Thy Mother and Thy saints—I must have witnesses like as in those old deeds where the chief nobility sign their names, I must have the nobles of heaven, the saints who have taught me of what flesh and blood is capable—I will and desire—and this is my firm determination, my will fixed, a lasting will—to imitate Thee. There is all in that one little word, to *imitate* Thee, to change, no longer to go as I have gone, to alter my aim and intention. Self-love has been the idol to which I have sacrificed myself; now I will not choose for myself, but imitate Thee in all things—imitate Thy charity in bearing injuries and reproaches, conscious of the likeness to Thee which they produce, if Thy Divine Majesty

shall send them,—Thy poverty also, spiritual poverty : “ Unless a man renounce all that he has, he cannot be Thy disciple.” Of necessity I must be poor in spirit, but not merely of necessity but of love, because it makes me like Thee ; I will be poor in absolute detachment from all by *will*, and really and actually when it shall be Thy Will. This is my desire, my firm determination, that I will imitate Thee thus.

This is the resolution I am to come to ; have I got it in me ? When such a call is made, can I answer it ? Our Lord is asking, “ Which place will you take,—in the ranks, or with Me, nearest and closest to Me ? Would you see more, know more than others ? Are you willing to accept a love of Me greater than others have ? Lovest thou Me more than these ? ” It has its consequences : love brings likeness ; there must be a closer resemblance. “ Another shall take thee and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. Can you look forward to the Cross with Me ? ” What answer will you make ? He is calling you to better things. Have you been mortified, humble, patient ? Have you conquered self-love and taken the lowest place ? Have you been content to be treated like Him ? He wants something of you—reformation of life—shall He have it ?

SPIRITUAL READING, *fourth day*.—Imitation of Christ, I. 1 ; II. 7.

PATRON.—St. John the Evangelist.

EXAMEN. *Meals*.—Temperance. Mortification. Purity of Intention. *Amusements*.—Sense of the Presence of God. Do I give myself to them, or only lend myself ?

C O N F E R E N C E .

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

THE EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE.

OUR Examen of Conscience, in order that it should be useful, must be methodical and done after a set plan, not by impulse. We should find what is the most convenient time, what the best plan, and then keep to it. Examen is essential, indispensable. Other duties we may omit through ill-health at times, or work may prevent us from making our vocal prayers, but we must keep up our examen through each single day even of our last illness. We say, "I should be sure to know anything grievous, I am not afraid of forgetting." Never think that, never think examen does itself. If ever you thought it did not signify, and gave it up for a time and then resumed it, did not you find a good many things had gone wrong? A state of tepidity, of real spiritual carelessness, may be brought on by missing self-examination; the fact of missing it is a proof of such a state. It is better done twice a day than once; it is a very great advantage that the time over which the examination must run should be short. It is not so much the hunting up of sins we have to look to, as the getting clear of

them ; so I shall take for granted there will be two examens in the course of the day.

FIRST POINT.—Start with an act of thanksgiving. If you want to make good acts of contrition, look to your gratitude ; that is the way to get contrition. Acts of thanksgiving for God's goodness move us to contrition better than anything else. So I give Him thanks for what He has done for me, that I had a good quiet night, that I got up when called, that I gave the proper time to my meditation, and that I can remember some of it now. Mass—certainly something to thank God for there ! Something to thank Him for in my relations, those with whom my lot is cast, a bit of prosperity or adversity—include the latter explicitly,—anything that went against the grain. Include one or two of the great things for which we owe Him so much, creation, preservation, providence, membership in His Church, the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord's life and death. This does not take long ; it is easily done when we are used to it.

SECOND. The second part consists of a prayer for light that I may see what I have done amiss, be sorry and amend. We are too apt to think that making out a little catalogue of sin is all we have to do, whereas the amendment is what we are aiming at ; so make prayer specially for this as well as for light and sorrow, and a prayer that you may make a good confession. People go straight to their examination without prayer, and then wonder they can't examine well. I am not going to work alone when I can have God's help. It will not answer unless I have Him to aid me.

THIRD. Next comes the examen itself ; it ought not to take long. That which people look on as the most important part is the least so really. We must not only know where we are but what we are to do. What course have I run ? How did I make my last examen ? With what attention ? Was it hurried, with a sort of promise to do better to-morrow ? Was the *greater* part of the time given to contrition and amendment ? Did I run off into discursiveness ? I am going through my day not to know how so-and-so behaved, or when I shall pay that bill, but how I have served God, and obeyed my conscience. Don't go on worrying as to whether you did or did not do this or that, but go to work in a straightforward way. Your preparation for meditation, recollection before, meditation itself, reflection, Mass, occupations—how were they done ? And if you have got yourself into the way of making a pure intention before every action, ask about that. If you dawdle, you will have distractions or scruples.

FOURTH. The fourth and fifth points are those which want most attending to—your *sorrow*. Bring up some sins or class of sins in your past life (never in detail), and include them in your act of contrition. This act is very precious as a habit. It may easily happen you may die suddenly, and if you have this habit you will be ready ; you will fly off into an act of contrition as quickly as possible ; but if you have not the habit, you will miss it. You know some sin by which you offended God ; make an act of sorrow calmly and deliberately. Don't disdain attrition : for such a sin I deserve to be shut out from God. Don't

confound fear with attrition ; to be afraid is not attrition. Attrition is the sorrow that comes from fear ; fear of the loss of God is a real motive for attrition. Pass on to the goodness of God to *you*. He gave me *this*. His kindness to me teaches me more about Him than a Bridgewater Treatise does. He singled me out for these blessings. He made me. Convince yourself of His goodness to you, and there is no fear but that you will make your act of contrition well.

FIFTH. Purpose of amendment. A little time spent over this is well spent. It is well to look at that in which there was not fidelity, and ask the reason why it was so. Homœopathic books give us symptoms and remedies—symptoms, but what we want is the cause of the symptoms. If I had a twinge of jealousy, was it an ebullition of self-love, or uncharitableness, or a desire to shine, or because some one cut me out in my particular line, conscience telling me not to be so foolish and I going on notwithstanding ?

After making the retrospect, look forward to the half day that is to come. Look at it quietly ; a forecast is very valuable. Such and such things to be done, people to be seen, they generally aggravate me, and I lose my temper ; or I get absorbed and too eager—yes, but I won't this time. Sailors look out that they may steer clear : we have to look out to our next examen. If there is no special danger, fix on some special virtue you may practise : in a quiet time we are to be getting on. Commend this to God and go to bed.

Do you want to know if your examen has been well done? Ask yourself a question which will be a real test, and if the answer is not satisfactory, spend a few more minutes on it. Are you ready to kneel down and go to confession? Have you the right disposition? If you can say yes, thank God; if you cannot, spend a little more time in making it right. Make some external sign which bears reference to confession, *e.g.*, beat your breast. Direct your examen always to the tribunal of penance,—and why? Because should you be taken ill in the night and lose your speech or consciousness, and the priest were to come and give you absolution, that would be enough, if the right dispositions are in your heart; you would receive the sacrament. A person, though unconscious, is capable of receiving the sacraments, if he has the right dispositions in his heart. How long an act of contrition, or faith, or love lasts, would differ with circumstances; if they are retracted, of course their efficacy goes, but also they wear out. If the mind has been occupied on many other things, they get rubbed out, and have no effective force left in them. There is *no* doubt that if you go to sleep on your act of contrition and lose your senses, it will last. Extreme unction does not require even so much—sorrow for sin being as necessary for penance as water for baptism. Extreme unction is valid if there is no obstacle, and takes effect always, so long as the recipient is in a state of grace.

Why should we not do our examen perfectly? What is the good of not doing things well? It is not very hard: it only requires a good will to

conquer that dead weight, want of energy, we carry about with us, to overcome that slothfulness which says, "Not to-night." "Not to-night" means a fortnight hence. Never think there is any excuse for missing examen of conscience. Days would soon improve if we always ended them by making the examen carefully, and God would be better served. Is there anything worth living for but pleasing Almighty God? Are ten minutes too much to give in order to make sure of pleasing God, to make sure of real solid increase in virtue, a tender conscience, a facility in going to confession, a happy death, final perseverance, everything that is good? Ten minutes well spent! Give those ten minutes, and things will not go wrong, and God will be pleased with you. You will have light and grace, and what else is there to care for?

FOURTH DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

THE INCARNATION.

IN the colloquy to our last meditation we asked that we might bear injuries and poverty in imitation of Jesus Christ. We are now turning to our King and studying His life to see how injuries and outrages can be borne. Our meditation is to be on the Incarnation and the way in which our Lady accepts the office assigned to her by God.

FIRST PRELUDE.—To look over the world as it was in those days with all the sins that were being committed, and then with a feeling of relief turn to the holy house, where Mary is spending her time in prayer, utterly unconscious of the dignity awaiting her.

SECOND PRELUDE.—To ask for light and strength. O my Lord, give me light to know You better in Your Incarnation, to see Your humility, that seeing it I may grow in the love of You and desire to follow You. (All through our meditation we may pick up other graces by the way.)

FIRST POINT.—Look at the world as it would have been if there had been no Incarnation, peopled with men engaged in every variety of occupation, as unlike one another as can be, yet all having one thing in common—disobedience

to God. Disobedience is an insult to God. It was an insult in the angels, how much more in men—puny creatures like us, setting themselves up against God! We are thinking of what the world would have been without the Church. Even if a man should merely live his life and forget God, what an insolence! Is God not worth thinking of? What then shall we say of disobedience to His commands, of flinging off the yoke, direct rejection of God, man insulting God, tempting others into sin, doing the work of devils, leading away professed servants of God, uttering evil words, complaining of His mercy and justice, saying things of Him that are false?

Now we want an example of bearing insult. How is it borne by the Ever-Blessed Trinity, the Omnipotent God? He decrees the Incarnation, the Redemption of that fallen race. Three Divine Persons who have one Divine Will concur in this work. God the Son condescends to become man: there is infinite Justice to be satisfied, and it shall be satisfied fully. Had He not been man, He could not make satisfaction for men, and were He not God, He could not make satisfaction to God. Can I imagine a condescension more sublime? It shows what forgiveness really is. We owe it to God that we should have the conception how to forgive. He made us marvellously, and redeemed us more marvellously. The condescension is to strike us, to help us: whilst we were sinners, God loved us and had compassion on us. What I want to create in my heart is confidence in Him. Can I fail to trust Him when I see how He has loved and cared for me?

God the Son teaches us how to bear injuries. He has gone into the midst of His enemies and handed Himself over to them in order to teach us humility ; and here are we, finding it so difficult to forgive and feeling a humiliation more than anything else. I have committed a sin against God which no one knows, and a mistake which made me look foolish before men ;—which do I care for most ? And here is my Lord coming, so that none shall know Him, to live in an obscure village and to die an object of contempt, men saying of Him, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” And here am I shrinking from the smallest humiliation and not from sin at all. He has come down from heaven to show me how to bear this humiliation for His sake. That is the real fruit of our meditation.

SECOND. Turn to Nazareth. Gabriel has been summoned and sent to be a messenger—not to be a priest with extraordinary powers, but a messenger. Is there not humility in Gabriel ? The grander he is, the more completely is he subject to God. The message is going to the humble Virgin of Nazareth. Who has thought much of her ? There was a retiring way about her, an unobtrusiveness. She must have known she had never offended God, that she had always been faithful to grace, but she hides herself away, hides her greatness from Joseph, and after the Resurrection and descent of the Holy Ghost is entirely hidden, though she lived with an Evangelist. In that poor village which was a by-word she dwells, and there Gabriel is sent. How things are all in keeping ! How much more grand Gabriel looks now

he is on earth ! Lucifer might have been what Gabriel now is, had it not been for pride. So he comes ; what a beautiful sight ! How reverently he salutes her in those dear familiar words, " Hail, full of grace !" Instead of welcoming praise Mary is taken by surprise. I imagine beforehand she could not have conceived it possible an angel's visit could surprise her, but he praises her, and she is disturbed because she is *humble*. Therefore it was that God chose her. God will have glory given to Him, not to another, and He will choose the weak things of the world. He will have us abuse ourselves and acknowledge we are but His instruments. He is determined man shall not be proud of his success. Those who would have the favour of God must imitate Mary and be humble. The humble take words of blame as a matter of course. When such come to me, I resent them, whereas words of praise raise my spirits, I feel much better after them. Oh for a little of the spirit of the Incarnation ! God chooses the humble, and I am proud.

Look at our Lady's conduct. She weighs the offer, and her acceptance is very deliberately given. Her whole tone is that of one who is accepting a grave responsibility, a heavy cross instead of an honour. The Mother of God and of all living acquires the right to the graces of that office, to be with her Incarnate Lord those thirty lovely years, and to have His gratitude that from her He has received the flesh and blood in which He will redeem the world ; and she humbling herself accepts, saying, " Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The greatest dignity that

was ever bestowed was accepted with an act of humility. This is included in it, to be the Mother of the *Saviour*, a victim; to share His sufferings with Him, to stand at the foot of the Cross, His Passion to be hers, the contradictions, outrages and scorn of men which were to be heaped on Him—in all these she must have her part. To be like Him and to shrink from humiliations is impossible; to all who would follow Him, He says, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but I have nowhere to lay My head.” The learned in the law of God, the priests of God’s house, the governor and the king are to reject Him as an impostor. Mary was to share it all, and she knew it; it was before her mind when she uttered those words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”

It is clear how I am to end my meditation. The Blessed Trinity, Mary, my Divine Redeemer in His Incarnation are teaching me humility, and I look at myself and find myself as proud as I can be. I will ask St. Gabriel to speak to Mary for me, to remind her of the day of her Annunciation, and to beg her to intercede for me, that now I may become humble and show myself humble in the way in which I bear humiliations, that I may bear them for my Lord, and in order to become like Him. And I will turn to Mary and ask that the child may not be unlike its Mother; and then to God the Father, who so loves me that He sends His Son to be my model; and to God the Son, who comes down to teach me humility; and to God the Holy Ghost, who dwells in my heart to change it; entreating that I may be taught to

pray and to be humble in prayer, and to long for humility, so that I may plead for it till I attain it. Thus I resolve, I will have gained before I rise some grand step forward, to the death of my pride, and to the acquiring of a real humility, which shall make me welcome humiliations with joy, because by them I am made like Jesus.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE NATIVITY.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The road from Bethlehem to Nazareth.

SECOND PRELUDE.—A prayer that I may recognize my Lord in His poverty, and be drawn to love Him and follow Him in such poverty as He may be pleased to allot to me.

Picture the house at Nazareth, where Joseph has set himself up as a carpenter; what must Mary have felt for that house where the Word was made flesh! How dear to her its associations! She knew that at Bethlehem the Messiah must be born; yet she waits at Nazareth in patience. How tranquil is our Mother waiting till God shall call her and work out His own designs! What a contrast to us! God employs a most elaborate machinery by which that prophecy shall be fulfilled—the decree of Cæsar that a census should be made. Judea was a little province

half-annexed, of which Herod was the tributary king. The Jewish manner of taking the census was that the head of every family went to the place to which he belonged. Herod took the census in the Jewish manner ; but according to the Roman rule, to which the Jews were then subject, the women had to go also ; the combination effected this. God has His purposes and carries them out through human means. Bismarck looks human : what good has come from all the suffering he has caused in his persecution of the Church ? God will be glorified through it ; He over-rules the actions of men. We shall see the course of His providence when we look down from heaven.

Mary and Joseph receive the order to go to Bethlehem through some subordinate official (not through Gabriel). They are poor, and must be content to be treated without much ceremony. They at once prepare to *obey*. That official was God's messenger to them. They make their preparations for the journey in ignorance of the future. They thought Bethlehem was to be their home, for when they returned from Egypt they were going there, had it not been for the warning St. Joseph received. God treats His friends so. He wished us to learn encouragement from the way in which He deals with His Mother. That kind of ignorance of the future—how useful it is ! It teaches us to cast ourselves into the hands of God.

Let us picture the road ; Mary riding on an ass, the flitting of a poor family, taking a few things with them, leaving the house in some one's charge. Dear Nazareth ! How Mary loved it ! Yet there is a

perfect readiness in her heart to leave it, if it were God's Will, for ever. But it was not to be : we give up things for God and He accepts our sacrifice, and then He gives them back, He is so loving.

It was a laborious journey for them and slow, and they have to bear many privations, for they are poor. May I not sit on a heap of stones by the roadside and see them pass, as though it were a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, and rise and follow as I should in a Catholic country, looking at Mary? She is very silent. There is a look of gentle welcome in her eye as she hears me saying to Joseph, "May I go too and be your little servant, and do what I can?" He will not refuse ; we are very safe when we have recourse to Joseph. So with a heart beating a little faster, I follow, and feel as if somehow the whole world were changed ; I am in such blessed company, I can scarcely recognize myself. The greatness of the world, its riches, its pleasures are nothing to me now. Could I desire to be rich and therefore out of place here? Yet they have a sort of honour ; they are of the royal race—Joseph the Son of David—the very title of our Lord. And they are coming to Bethlehem, because they belong to that sacred line and royal race. They could lay claim to that which is honourable when it was God's Will, and teach us to bear honours well. Let us not forget the lesson, for honours are very dangerous, and to be used only for the praise, reverence and service of God. But the honour of belonging to a royal race brings inconvenience to Joseph and Mary. Bethlehem is very full, because all who had any right to be enrolled

there would come, and as they are the wealthier people, they could secure the lodgings beforehand. So Mary and Joseph, when they arrive at the fountain which is at the entrance of the town, find assembled there a crowd of servants, horses, camels and caravans. Joseph inquires whether there is any chance of a poor family finding rooms in Bethlehem; the answer is not encouraging, for the town is full. He says to Mary it would be better for her to wait whilst he goes to seek what shelter can be found; and she dismounts and sits in a field, and St. Joseph starts on his hopeless errand. Shall we stay in quiet with Mary, or accompany St. Joseph into the noisy town? I think we must go with him, for we have a lesson to learn. The first place he goes to is the great caravansari, where travellers usually lodge, but that is crowded. He looks into the courtyard; if there is no other place they might perhaps encamp there, but that also is crowded, the camels and horses of the rich are installed there. Then he goes from house to house, and everywhere he is told there is no room. His heart is pained. He knows for whom he is seeking shelter—not for angels, but the Lord of angels. There is no room for Him, the King of the earth! “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” He must be born outside the city, for there is none within to give Him welcome.

Joseph reminds Mary of a cave they saw in a field a little distance off—a cave where cattle rest at night;—and this he proposes as a place of shelter, and there they go. He makes what preparation he can.

In the silence of that midnight the Word came to

take possession of the world He had made, to meet rejection at the outset. He so arranged it that this should be the poverty of the commencement of His life. And angels can find no audience for their songs but shepherds, and the shepherds go and worship Him, and as long as they live they never forget that Christmas night ! Great poverty to begin with, ordinary poverty throughout His life, but yet deeper poverty than between the ox and the ass, when He hangs on the Cross between two thieves, and Joseph of Arimathea begged for His body, as that of an executed slave, from the Roman governor. How He loved poverty ! And I—how I resent everything that can make me like my Lord ! Have I learnt how He loves to be poor, how He has emptied Himself and made Himself of no reputation ? Do you remember the story of St. Francis of Assisi, the great lover of poverty, as he sat in the refectory of his monastery—a bare place with only benches and a table—one Christmas night whilst the history of the birth of our Lord was being read ;—how he rose and cast himself weeping on the ground, exclaiming, “ O Lord, so poor, and I so rich ! ” Saints look at things with other eyes than ours, and our Lord tells tales to them He has not condescended to tell us. Dear poverty of spirit ! How welcome should we make it and how we should learn to love it more and more !

FIFTH DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE HIDDEN LIFE AT NAZARETH.

THE Hidden Life at Nazareth is one of the most delightful subjects on which to meditate. We cannot go to Nazareth too often.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The Holy House. I have spent three days there, and I shall never forget them ; it was an epoch in my life. Rome even could not do for me what the *Santa Casa* did. I was allowed to sweep it. Those who sweep it, sweep on their knees, and well they may, for Who has swept it? I remember the last morning I spent there, when they lit the candles for Mass, and I leant against the wall with the sense of being *at home*. There is nothing like it *anywhere*, nothing that will teach one so much. One *visits* other places, one can *live* there and be at home. One can lean against the wall of the house where Jesus lived and Mary and Joseph, and try to live with them. It is a little bit of a house just like the other houses at Nazareth. There the Redeemer of the world lived.

SECOND PRELUDE.—We must ask one grace, that of holy obedience, that we may learn to love obedience for the love of Him Who preached it all His life long, till the obedience of the Cross. We will ask the grace of being able to go on in dull

homely work that shall have no show, to seem to be wasting life, provided it be the Will of God, that we may get to prize obedience for the sake of Him Who practised it those long years. We want an intimate knowledge of Him.

“Where dwellest Thou?” Andrew asked, and our Lord said, “Come and see.” Now I am coming, and He is admitting me to His intimacy, His interior life. Oh that I may never forget it, and may love with an intense love my Lord made man for me, leading a laborious life, wasting His life for me! How can I help loving Him when I see Him in His home? How can I help trying to make my home-life like His?

He grew in stature and advanced in grace. His perfection was incapable of increase, but He chose to manifest by degrees the grace that was in Him. He was perfect in infancy, perfect in childhood, perfect in youth, always showing the virtues and graces of each age. This was His growth, Mary and Joseph saw Him grow. Each day they had some fresh glimpse into the perfection of the virtues of His soul, and were drawn closer and closer to Him: it was a little anticipation of Paradise. He knew how prone I should be to rest satisfied and not try after more grace, but be contented that one day should be like another. He resolved His life should be a lesson, that I might understand more and more what God wants, and use to better purposes the graces He gives.

Consider how they went to live at Nazareth after having been so knocked about. What a homeless wandering it has been from Nazareth to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Egypt, from Egypt back again!

So God treats many of us. He does not like us to have too fixed a home ; we must learn detachment. Oh, if we could but see that He is our Master, that we might long to advance in the knowledge He teaches ! Jesus is subject to Mary and Joseph ; the Holiest was the lowest. He ordered things as He would, and He would be the last and the lowest in the house. It is an inverse order to what we should have expected, Joseph the lowest is highest. Anywhere else how grand would be St. Joseph ! No one could compare with him, but what is he compared with Mary and Jesus ? Joseph the last in merit is the first in dignity. I suppose he had no choice. Most of us would like to have plenty under us ; we should not *choose* to be the least and lowest in the house ; we prefer to be like the Centurion and to say to one "Go," and to another "Come." But our Lord took the lowest place and was employed in sweeping up the chips and going on errands. Let us look at the obedience that was practised in the Holy House at Nazareth. There was no disturbance there, because all were obedient. Joseph obeyed in ruling : those who rule must look to Joseph as their example, and Mary. Joseph and Mary must have been inclined to go down on their knees always before Jesus, instead of saying, "Do this, and do that." Our Lord's life was regulated for Him by those who in sanctity were inferior to Him in an infinite degree. He preferred the place of submission. It was not He who divided the day and fixed the hours, it was done for Him. He never asks to be left alone, and not to be interfered with. When they said, "Leave off doing that,"

or "Do it in some other way," He conformed Himself at once. Obedience was dear to Him, and He had a lesson to teach. He knew how we resent being ordered, and while *three* years sufficed for Him to teach a doctrine such as the world had never heard, He would for *thirty* years be obedient. And I? If I obey God and the Church, I think that enough. Our Lord regards human creatures as representatives of His Eternal Father. He is as ready at their bidding to make the fire and pick up wood as to kneel down and reverence His Eternal Father. And I? What have I done? How do I obey? There are those who have a right to speak—a husband, parents, those to whom power is delegated; but an eager heart will seek pretext for obeying others, such as going out for a walk if wanted, however disagreeable it may be. First, then, there is the obedience we are bound to give; we have but rare occasions of exercising this, because those who have the right to do so, very seldom command. The command is generally expressed gently, because we are so proud we should resent it otherwise. In imperative cases, where a parent says, "No, you must not," then you are obliged to obey under pain of sin. A wish is often a tender form that a command assumes. Do I follow my own will when there is a will representing God against it? Do I obey the desire of a superior, because there are so few occasions when a command comes, and obedience is so dear to God? These will be the occasions to conform ourselves to those who have a right to command; it is impossible to divest ourselves of the respect due

to them. Their wish is something sacred, except of course when it comes in contact with a Higher Law. If God places you where you have to rule, you must judge for the best in obedience to God ; but in other cases why should you not submit yourself to the will of those about you, where it does not go the least against your judgment? If done ingenuously, much virtue may thus be acquired. Be obedient to the striking of the clock, the bell to dress for dinner, and such like things.

Our Lord is a carpenter's apprentice ; this is the obedience He is practising at Nazareth. He is doing all after St. Joseph's fashion ; what St. Joseph indicates, He does. When St. Joseph said, "Put those pieces of wood together in such a way," He did it at once, although He knew it was a poor, bungling way. We are not to like to do things in one way, in a more perfect way, if God wants them done in another. He Who is Infinite Wisdom submits His judgment ! He knows that when St. Joseph speaks it is the Will of God. It is not the Will of God that everything is to be done in the best way. We say, "But this is such a much better way—*my* way." Self-love leads us to think it a better way : a calm and unbiassed judgment sees that a thing can be done in a less perfect way. Could not God have a better world ? God's wisdom is exhausted only in the Generation of the Son, and Their love in the Procession of the Holy Ghost, and in nothing else. Everything else could have been done better. Cherubim and angels and saints and even His Blessed Mother He could have made still greater than He has done,

but it is His Will that rules all things. Those actions only are well done that are done in conformity to the Will of God. I have to learn that things do not depend on my will: whether I like a thing, does not signify *in the least*. I have no choice at all unless God gives me a choice, and then I am to choose because He wills me to choose.

How our Lord loved a laborious life! From being a carpenter's apprentice, He succeeded at Joseph's death to the place of the carpenter. He did not choose for Himself what He would do; He took it all, the rough and awkward work, each in its turn. I like to pick and choose. "Yes, I'll do that, but not the rough work." What have I to do with choosing? The happy life is that of the Carpenter at Nazareth, Who took what came. One brought a broken cart, desiring He would mend it: to Him that man's voice was the voice of His Father, showing the way in which He was to earn bread for Himself and Mary that day; His hands were employed in mending that cart! Was it necessary that the Son of God should be thus employed? God's ways are not like ours; the error lies in us and our worldly ideas, which pronounce things to be mean. What is mean? I don't know—except sin.

Our Lord comes home in the evening tired. Mary's eyes are gladdened by the sight of Him when He returns to her. After supper He finishes up His work and then makes the place clean and tidy. What order is there in my day? Does each action tend to the glory of God? The first thing then is orderliness, doing everything according to God's Will.

If you repine at what God has set you to do—your household work,—and want to spend your time in contemplation instead, it would not be orderly. Better see God in all your work, and ask if He is satisfied with everything, or whether He would like it done differently. Our Lord's was always a laborious day. Can it be right to saunter through life, never asking what I have done for God and whether He wanted something more from me. Can it be right to be idle, not knowing what to do next? So the day runs by and is wasted—those hours will never return. No need for those hours of the thirty years to come back; throughout eternity we shall enjoy the light of those days of real hard work. Shall we enjoy the sight of these days of ours in which we have done nothing at all for God and made no progress, but floated idly down the stream? Cannot I make my life more like my Lord's life at Nazareth?

There is another lesson He teaches—a lesson of humility. Whilst He was at Nazareth, He was in reality the servant of all; every one was privileged to find fault with Him. A bench, a roof, a plough, these things He had made had to be taken home, and often people, when they pay, will run a thing down. They grumbled at Him, judged Him harshly, never gave Him a word of praise perhaps—was not that humiliating? If I am treated like that, how do I take it? I want a few words of compliment, I must draw for them, if they don't come. Was He praised? Do I put Him before me in prayer, but in practical life never try to imitate Him? Suppose I

asked Him to let me have a taste of His humiliations to-day, and He did, what would happen? I should be cross. Never mind, try again; it will go better another time. If with all your preparation humiliation was so difficult to meet, what would it be if it came unexpectedly? *Why* do we meditate except to prepare for the day? You tell me you don't know how to fill your meditation time. Think of the sort of things that come in the course of the day, and then see if in those things you can't become like Him. He was paid for His work, He had to ask for payment, He held out His hand for it—there was coin circulating that had passed through His blessed hands. How our pride would shrink from the idea of being paid! We think the value of things lies in *our* having done them; it was true of Him, but He never spoke of it. He might have said to His employers, "These things you think dear, angels would adore." He only thought of His Father's Will. That Father for the first time could look down with perfect satisfaction on one little spot in the world. Cannot I give Him some satisfaction and count all as noble that God would have me do, and regard those things only as worthy that are pleasing in the sight of my heavenly Father?

SPIRITUAL READING, *fifth day*—Imitation of Christ, I. 2; III. 7-14.

PATRON—St. Joseph.

EXAMEN—Spiritual Reading. Attention and Alacrity.

CONFERENCE.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

PARTICULAR EXAMEN AND CONFESSION.

PARTICULAR Examen consists in our attention being directed to some one thing in particular with a view to putting it right, sometimes to correct a fault, sometimes to acquire a virtue. Charity in speech, for example,—we might take that as our subject for a few weeks. We find other people's faults a very interesting topic. We can attract attention by telling tales about others.

There are three periods when we must attend to the particular examen; the first is in the morning, and this people often forget. As soon as I have risen and offered the day to God, I make a special resolution about the subject of my particular examen. You cut the head off, if you neglect the morning part; nothing can go on well without its head. At mid-day you throw your mind back, and see how your particular examen went. It ought to be very easy. It must be in our mind, so that we see at once where we have failed. Each time you fail, make an act of sorrow and some external sign. Note down in your book the number of times that you have failed. The devil fights hard against this, loses

your pencil, persuades you it is of no consequence to omit it once or twice. The giving up of the particular examen is the first sign of things going to the bad and of tepidity coming on.

Suppose you are anxious to attain purity of intention and are going to direct your examen to that ; you will either count the chief actions of your day and make up your mind there will be six perhaps in the morning and a like number in the afternoon, and note the deficiency in the corresponding acts of purity of intention ; or you may mark positively instead of negatively, noting down the number of acts you have made. At first there will be only three or four but in time sixteen or twenty. Your standard may change as you go on, and it is right it should. This method is so intensely simple ; yet it will make the difference between a spiritual person and a worldly person. Don't think it is not fit for you, because you are in such difficult circumstances in the world. You need such helps as these.

Let us now consider our practice as to confession. People don't get anything like the good they might from it. Unless they go to it as a sacrament, they don't go with a right reason. Those who make short confessions are most likely to make good ones. The amount of care we take to receive the sacrament can't be too great. Do you go for the sake of absolution ? What is to be thought of those who can't go to Mr. So-and-so because they have not got confidence in him ? People in the country are often exposed to this temptation. But he can give absolution, and he will keep the seal of the sacrament. Bear in your

mind that you want to be absolved, and do not mind who the priest is. Sacramental confession is not direction ; go where you like for the latter.

Preparation for confession is by no means always what it ought to be. Some people prepare themselves by simply scraping together all the sins they can remember and many more besides. They mention their acts of virtue too, *e.g.*, "I had a temptation, but I resisted it." Unless we *mean* to do wrong, we can't do wrong. We may not be certain whether we have yielded ; then let us say so. The sooner temptations are forgotten the better. Anything your conscience reproaches you with, mention. When you have nothing but venial sins to mention, the confession may be informal, but no one can make a *bad* confession without meaning it. "Informal" means that the necessary conditions were wanting, without the penitent knowing that they were wanting. That again is very rare. Our Lord has made the conditions so easy, the ignorant can perform them. When once a person has taken honest pains about a general confession, and years after a sin occurs to his memory as not having been confessed, the presumption is it was forgiven. How easy it is to satisfy the precept ! What a mistake to think of nothing but the accusation ; to have the mind solely occupied with that and nothing else ! To bring venial sin is very good, and add some past sin even if already forgiven as matter for absolution because of sacramental grace. This is the reason why we recommend habitual confession ; the sacrament gives us an increase of sacramental grace, and the soul is fortified to go on its way. We

should regulate more carefully the things we mention.

It is of vital consequence to secure the proper dispositions. Before you go to confession, you must make one, and more than one, good act of contrition and purpose of amendment. If we have really made our act of contrition before, should it chance we were distracted all the time of absolution, we should be none the worse, because the absolution would fall on that act of contrition. You would do well always to single out one thing in which to amend. If you brought all your fire to bear on one point, you would get the point very quickly.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

OUR LORD GOING TO THE TEMPLE AND REMAINING
THERE.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The road to Jerusalem. The beauty of the Temple. The court where they knelt in prayer.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask for an intimate knowledge of our Divine Redeemer, His detachment from earthly ties and obedience to His Father's Will. "Teach me willingly to make the sacrifice of whatever stands between me and Thy Will."

Before leaving Nazareth we will take one more glance at the Holy House and the order that reigns there ; everything so clean and well kept, the tools bright, all betokening hard work, care and attention. The little things tell the tale ; all things are great when done for God's sake. When He asks me to do a little thing, shall I not do it ?

They set out on their journey. St. Joseph was bound to go ; it was a precept for him, but not for Mary ; she went out of devotion. It was no light precept to have to go up to Jerusalem three times a year. God knew what was necessary for His people ; He would not let them wander away from Him. In Mary we see that higher obedience which looks on a sign or a wish as equal to a command, a readiness

to obey and a spirit of devotion. Jesus goes to renew that oblation made at His Presentation. God loves those renovations: the will is kept alive by renovation of its offering, as fire is by fuel. What God wants is the *heart* that gives the offering.

Let us contemplate the Holy Family on the road to Jerusalem. How cheerful they are! they look even brighter than usual. Can we wonder that Joseph and Mary should feel singularly happy when going to God's house in company with Jesus? How they speak of the beauties of God's house! How interested they are in every detail!—the work was still going on. How they enjoy all sacred things and talk over God's dealings with His people, our Lord taking His part as a boy of twelve should. Have I learnt any lesson about my conversation and the way in which I should talk of sacred things? Sacred things may be the subject of conversations that are far from edifying.

They come to the Holy City; they have crossed the Jordan twice; it has been a long journey but such a happy journey. How many things our Lady has treasured up! How full it has been of spiritual consolation! And now they have greater consolation together in the house of God. Perhaps Joseph and Mary knelt where they could see our Lord; it must have been wonderful to watch Him praying; we may manage so to bring this sight before us that it may do all we need, and show us how to offer our prayers. Think of the grace that must have come to Joseph and Mary during those twelve years, teaching them how to pray. They are near Him now and drawing

in such consolation from His nearness. How close their souls are to God ! Sometimes we too have been brought very near to God, and the veil between us and Him seemed partly withdrawn ; but our joy in those moments of happiness could not compare with the joy of Mary and Joseph, as they knelt in the Temple beside the Divine Child.

And now they are to return to Nazareth in company with their fellow-citizens. Joseph joins the party of men, Mary goes with the women, our Lord imperceptibly withdraws Himself from them, probably when they visit the Temple in the morning before starting. The first day goes by. A vague sense of pain, of loss, comes to Mary and Joseph, each believing Jesus was with the other. How they miss Him ! But Mary is glad Joseph should have Him, and Joseph rejoices that Mary should be consoled by His presence. The beginning of a great desolation—how closely it follows a great consolation ! It is often so : such is God's way of treating us, consolation disappearing suddenly, its very greatness making its absence more perceptible. It is withdrawn now from Joseph and Mary, that they may unite themselves more closely to God than when Jesus was with them. Both are precious times ; when consolation comes, it is to be made the most of ; it is not intended to be the staple of our lives. It comes when God sees it is best for us. What use do we make of it ? Are we so foolish as to say, " Well, I have made some progress, and got over some of the difficulties," and attribute to ourselves what was God's only ? Beginners are those to whom God sends consolations.

Good, solid desolation is more the kind of thing we are to look forward to, by which we are to glorify God, revere, praise and serve Him. When it comes, however, we think it is all over with us. Twenty or thirty times in my meditation, my mind wandered, and I had to bring it back. I congratulate you; any one can pray in consolation, but to pray in desolation, to keep steadily to prayer, to see what acts to make, with whom to make my colloquy—there is merit in that.

The first day is ended, and in the evening Mary and Joseph meet and read in each other's faces what has happened. Their looks betray how each has been waiting for the evening that their souls may be refreshed by the sight of Jesus. It is a trial the like of which they have not yet had. Nothing is such a test as how we bear a novel trial: it takes a very solid grace to lose no portion of the grace of a new trial. He might have told them. Why did He not prepare them? That would have been the natural thought. The virtue of Mary is so deep, there is no repining in her. We say of our trial, "If it only had been different," because our hearts are not wholly given to God. Oh, if I could but learn that He is the Master and loving Father, sending the very trial which is to do me good!

Mary and Joseph spend the night, not knowing what God means. When trouble comes, we say, "If I could only know how it is to end!" God wants from us complete dependence on Himself; the darker our prospects the happier we ought to be, the more prepared to throw ourselves on Him completely.

When morning comes, see what sorrow has done for them. Mary is immaculate, and there is no saint like Joseph ; yet they are full of natural affection—natural affection completely subject to the Will of God. A mother's love was created by God ; detachment consists in giving up her child notwithstanding. Everything reminds them of Jesus ; thus they go back recalling past consolations. The time of trouble is the time for us to remember how sweet God has been, and call to mind all His goodness. Thus are we to strengthen ourselves in desolation. They look for Him among their friends, and they go to His house. Let me go to His house, and there perhaps I may find Him Whom my soul seeketh.

The third day foreshadows the morning of the Resurrection, and now there is joy in Mary's soul. Her loving eye sees Him as He sits in the midst of the doctors ; she and Joseph perhaps would kneel, waiting for His time. He had never before exercised any independence of their authority ; He does now ; it must be right. They hear Him speaking so modestly, yet with such wisdom disclosing itself in His words. The men to whom He is talking live in the Temple ; holy doctors they are, to whom the people have recourse in their doubts. They are surrounding our Lord, He asking questions that went to their hearts, they uttering half-developed thoughts that He has helped to elicit, and they ask Him questions in their turn, and He answers so modestly and recollectedly. Yet all the time while the words of wisdom were pouring from His lips, He had His sorrow, because it was His Father's Will that He

should give His Mother such pain. Natural affection was there in perfection ; He felt Himself all she could feel and more, and yet so calmly He was carrying on His Father's business. We, when we are in desolation, are often cross, and do our Father's work very badly.

Our Lord saw Mary and Joseph all the time, and knew all that they felt—all their bewilderment and anguish during those long hours, and sent them special graces to bear the trial. Those graces went out warm from His Sacred Heart ; He loved them more in their great grief. When He seemed to be hard, He was bestowing on them greater graces. Though He saw them enter the Temple, He keeps them waiting awhile. Another mother would have hastened forward ; Mary is ever quiet. At last He comes calmly to her, and her burdened heart breaks forth : "Son, why hast Thou so dealt with us ?" Our Lord does so love expostulation. When He seems far from you, speak to Him tenderly from a heart full of love, "Shew me the brightness of Thy countenance. Watch over me during Thy absence. I know Thou art not far, but why hast Thou dealt so ? Is it that I may love Thee more ? Welcome then the pain, if only I may love Thee more !"

"Didst thou not know I must be about My Father's business ?" The answer is obscure. He has not explained Himself yet ; afterwards Mary will ask Him, and He will tell her.

As in trial her will and Joseph's were conformed to the Will of God, so now on their journey home to Nazareth—Jesus with them—they have new and

fresh consolations. On the way back He lavishes on them marks of love, and they are happy after their trial as they never were happy before. There is a depth of consolation even here after a long trial. Yet this is not the reward. This life is one long desolation when compared with our real reward. Let us go in search of Jesus and at last in God's own Temple we shall find Him.

FIFTH DAY.

[8.40 P.M.]

THE TWO STANDARDS.

THE meditation on the two standards—the standard of Jesus Christ and the standard of Lucifer—is put before us in order that we may understand the difference between the tactics of the two leaders. We have already chosen our standard. We belong to Jesus Christ.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the plain of Babylon where the Evil One gathers his host ; and then Jerusalem, where our Lord is—the Mount perhaps where He delivered His sermon.

SECOND PRELUDE.—A double prayer,—that I may know and understand the wiles of my enemy in order that I may avoid them, and that I may know and understand the principles of Jesus Christ in order that I may follow Him.

FIRST POINT.—Look at the enemy of mankind on

his throne, the incarnation of pride. There is much in this meditation that is intensely useful in our spiritual life. Babylon with its confusion represents disinclination to restraint, the throne of fire fierce passions, the smoke obscurity, doubts, hesitation, difficulties. There in the midst is Lucifer inspiring terror, weariness, repugnance to what is good, love of ease, horror of penance, of shame and humiliation and everything that leads men to God. He summons his host, an innumerable host : at what fearful odds would men contend, were it not for God ! There is a fearful zeal about these evil spirits—the devil gets his work better done than God does. They are to go everywhere, into every corner ; who can wonder that no place is free from temptations ? They are to go into the whole world and tempt every creature to love of riches first, and then to love of the vain honour of the world. We are asked to recognize the *frauds* of our enemy, his treachery and deception, how he fights for our souls, that they may be won over to his side. Riches in themselves are harmless, but the *love* of riches is always bad, and sure to be full of the gravest dangers. The devil tries to attach us to a thing that is not bad in itself. Love of riches means love of that which they represent—comfort, luxury, position, all those things that money can procure. My position ! It is easy for me to attach myself to it under the appearance of good, and then there comes the love of honour. Reputation is an innocent thing, quite indifferent in itself, but this desire that people should look to me, trust to my judgment, and say, “I would as soon consult her as a priest,” is very

dangerous. We are so ready to believe flattery, to feel gratified if we are set up as a little queen, and made out to be something we are not, to be told, "How good you are! how well you do this!" Alas for these empty honours, to obtain which people will sacrifice anything! Honour leads on to pride. The devil does not suggest pride, because it comes naturally from love of esteem.

SECOND. Now look at the other picture. The summit of the hill on which stands our Divine Redeemer amid wild flowers and green grass, beautiful and fairer than the sons of men. He is speaking of meekness, gentleness and humility. He calls His followers; there is no great answer to His call. A few fishermen, a publican, a pharisee, attach themselves to Him. He does not want lukewarm followers, He would bid those whose hearts are not with Him to go home. He wants disciples who can say with Peter, "We have left *all*." In every land there will be some found who will enroll themselves in His army, not many wise, not many noble, perhaps, mainly the poor—to the poor the Gospel is preached. But there is an invisible host of angels to fight His battles, and with angels men. With evil spirits too are associated men and women who can tempt. Our Lord is sending poor weak creatures like us out into the world to proclaim His Gospel. An Apostle comes to me and says, "He is calling you." Our Lord gives me His instructions: "Come, be My helper; help me to save men, not in word only, but in practice and example. Begin with love of poverty, and then pass on to love of contempt; and you will

be safe." Our Lord is not speaking of exceptional cases. When He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," did He mean it only for a few? He means it for me. *All* of us must be poor in spirit, detached from wealth, comfort, position in the world; all of us must have not only poverty of spirit, but such actual poverty as our Lord may call for from us. This detachment involves great love of our Lord, and it is love of our Lord that makes it possible for us to acquire it.

After love of poverty comes love of dishonour. We have been meditating on that, but we have not dwelt upon it enough yet, for it seems strange and difficult to us still. Humility! What would we not give to be able to leap at once into humility? It makes everything beautiful, it sets the soul at peace; when once we are so low down, no one could put us lower; we are calm and tranquil. What other way of obtaining humility is there than our Lord's, detachment from creatures and humiliations? Tell me any other way. Can I do without humility? I simply can't. If I am under the banner of my Redeemer, I will be true to my colours; have humility I must, have it I will. There is no escape; His detachment and humiliations must be mine, and the reward will be humility. And so I make my colloquies—one to our Lady, one to our Lord, and one to the Eternal Father, asking in each that I, being under the banner of the Son of God, may live like the Son of God.

SIXTH DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WITH OUR BLESSED LORD.

WE will spend our day with our Lord, to refresh us, remaining in His blessed company without the view of gaining any special lesson.

Imagine the sea of Galilee very early in the morning, calm, quiet, the water smooth, just breaking on the beach, cranes standing there lazily as in Raphael's picture, the day dawning. Our Lord calls His apostles. They had just come back from a mission ; they were triumphant, for they had worked miracles, the devils even were subject to them, and He in His gentle way told them He had seen Lucifer fall from heaven, and that, instead of rejoicing in the devils being subject to them, they were rather to rejoice that their names were written in heaven. Then He says, "Let us go into a desert place and rest awhile." We shall see presently what sort of rest it was. They embark, some rowing, St. Peter steering with our Lord close by, telling him what to do. Every one can look at our Lord where He sits. He begins to talk, a little at a time. There is a pause, and we can hear the oars in the water. Then a murmur is heard, and, looking to the beach, they see a quantity of people who had come there in search of

our Lord. What a power of attracting He had ! How forgetful these people were of everything else ! Their minds were so pre-occupied, they started without food, some being sick, others coming to ask explanations with such eagerness, forgetting the day's wants, ready to follow Him anywhere.

When they are well out on the lake, our Lord makes His disciples eat. Then they go to a desert-place near Bethsaida, where they are to disembark. The people come there, and our Lord sits in the boat, St. Peter holding the prow and our Lord talking just in the way that will touch their hearts, saying plain simple things to child-like souls. Our Lord goes about all through the day, speaking first to one, then to another. Not one amongst that crowd who sought Him in faith will be disappointed ; every one will have received what he came for. " Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."

So the day goes on : the sun gets low, and the apostles come and say, " Ought not the people to go and provide themselves with food ? " Our Lord says, " Could not you give them bread ? " Then we hear St. Philip's observation and St. Andrew's, and our Lord sends His disciples to make the people sit down. It is a fine grassy place with wild flowers ; He had chosen the place. He would have all done with order, so His disciples range the multitude in companies of fifty, occupying a vast space. What will He do ? Why has He ranged them so ? they wonder, and their gaze is rivetted on Him, watching Him intently. He raises His eyes to heaven, and with

such majesty He blesses the food ! That sight alone was enough for the whole day, if there had been nothing else ; it was well worth their while to have endured hunger and fatigue, if only thus to be rewarded. He gives bread to the apostles, and the apostles break the bread, and the handful each has is enough for fifty men. Then the fishes, and those two little fishes suffice for all. We may imagine how the people enjoy their meal, the apostles pressing it on them. Was there ever food so delicious ? What a meal—our Lord furnishing the provisions, and the apostles being the servants !

When the wants of all have been satisfied, our Lord sends His apostles to gather up the fragments, which fill twelve baskets, and they are to have the broken food. How proud they are of Him ! He joins them in their meal. He has come to minister ; He helps Himself as though He were the last amongst them. But night is coming on, and He tells His disciples to embark in the boat. They do not want to leave Him again ; they had only just come back to meet Him at Capharnaum, but He bids them embark. It is difficult work rowing when Jesus is not there ; the oars seem heavy.

When they are afloat, our Lord dismisses the people, and the cry rises and rises, “ Our King ! long live our King ! ” And our Lord calms their excitement—He knows how to calm ; and He bids them go home and bless God for what they have had that day. Soon they are gone, and the place where they sat in such crowds is empty. What a place to see, that desert place ! It is worth our while

to linger there in spirit. Might we not find a fragment?

And now our Lord will make His prayer. After that hard day He goes up the mountain, making His preparation as He goes, rejoicing that He can dedicate this time to prayer. His weariness is forgotten, such is His love, His human love for God. How great is His delight that the time has come when, without interfering with His Father's Will, He can give Himself to prayer! How reverently He kneels! His soul looks into Heaven that He may see God. This is the occupation that He loves. How He offers Himself body and soul to His Eternal Father! First He makes an act of sacrifice, and then He begins to pray for others. Those apostles on the lake, things have altered with them now—poor weary men who wanted a day's rest; but He had ordered them to row out. The wind is boisterous, the waves high, the boat is tossed about and makes little progress; yet that boat is the boat of obedience. Our Lord Himself prescribed the voyage, which looks as if it would end in shipwreck. But He is praying, mentioning each one by name, sending a benediction to each, seeing what is happening to each. How different from that time when He was with them, though asleep! He is not there now; they don't know when they are to see Him again; it has been a toilsome night, but one of benediction. Was it not worth their while to undergo the toil when our Lord was praying for them on the mountain-top, witnessing their labour? He prays also for all those five thousand. He watches each wending his way

home that night through the storm, and He gives commissions to their angels who watch them. Their hearts are so full, the difficulties seem nothing ; they go home with the memory of a day that will never fade.

His heart is not exhausted yet : He looks out and sees the vast multitude of souls throughout the world, and distinguishes them one from the other ; He lifts up His heart and makes a sacrifice for each and every one, bringing them all the grace that is needed, strengthening the feeble wills and comforting those that are in sorrow. And He looks on into far distant ages, and sees all that are to come after ; every soul that ever will exist is present to Him, and He has a call, a work, a help for each one, whom He commends to His Father, and for whom He offers the Body and Blood that are beyond price.

The night is advanced. The apostles have not got far ; He sees the time is come when He should rescue them. He walks down the mountain. How different the beach is now ! He puts His foot on the water, and it bears Him up. The storm is raging. The light of glory that is in Him makes Him visible in the darkness. So He comes near to the boat, and those in the boat cry out in fear. Oh, how often Jesus is near us and we do not know Him, coming to our rescue and we are afraid ! He who comes only to still the storm, frightens us. He consoles them—"It is I, be not afraid." It should be so through life : whatever comes, there will be His voice always speaking—"It is I who ask this of you, I who lead you here, I who will provide ; be

not afraid." What a humiliation that such a thing should have to be said to us when we know it is our Lord—nay rather, what a humiliation for Him that it can be possible we should still fear Him! Love casts out fear. It is a humiliation when He has to say, "It is I." Our hearts should have leapt up at once in welcome. Is it not He? In whom shall I place confidence if I have not confidence in Him?

Now there is St. Peter's eager voice; he has not been parted from His Lord long, but he cannot wait; a few minutes and He will be in the ship. No, Peter must meet Him half-way. "Lord, bid me come to Thee!" Grand words, asking for an obedience! It is right to wait till the order comes, but it was a good impulse. Perhaps it was not the wisest prayer, but the loving heart of our Lord gives to each one what he wants. Peter is walking bravely on the water not very far from Jesus; there are but few more steps and he will reach his Lord. So long as his eye is fixed on Jesus, all is well. But now comes a sense of diffidence, he loses courage and begins to sink. Many have been drowned where Peter began to sink, in that diffidence, that forgetfulness of our Lord and His power. But Peter is not the man to forget his Lord for long, and he cries out, "Lord, save me, I perish." "Why were you afraid?" he hears in answer, and now once more his foot is on the water and he walks hand-in-hand with Jesus, and so they reach the boat. And now the storm is over. While the others were watching, thinking Peter would be drowned, the wind has ceased and the waves have gone down and the light of day-break begins. No

more rowing, no further efforts are needed ; our Lord is there. He asserts His power, and they are in the port.

And we are still on the waves of life, with our work to do. It is sometimes calm, and Jesus is near. Sometimes He is far off, rescuing us perhaps when we have risked what we should not risk, saving us when His Heart is wounded by our diffidence. The day will come when we shall be in port—our foot on the eternal shore with Jesus !

SPIRITUAL READING, *sixth day*—Imitation of Christ, III. 13-37.

PATRON—St. Francis of Sales.

EXAMEN—*Meals.* Temperance, Mortification, Purity of Intention. —*Amusements.* Sense of the Presence of God. Do I give myself to them, or only lend myself ?

C O N F E R E N C E .

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

THE METHODS OF ELECTION. THREE CLASSES OF MEN. THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

WE come now to the time when we are to make resolutions and see what we can take out of retreat. Having studied our Lord's life, the question suggests itself, What ought *I* to do ? It is better to attend to one thing than many. A number of small resolutions

may be necessary to support one great one, like buttresses supporting a church tower. I do not consider that "I am going to make a daily meditation or the particular examen" is a sufficient resolution. *Of course* you must do these, but you must fix on some one definite thing besides, that will bring you more into harmony with the life of our Lord. St. Ignatius gives us the methods of election to help us at this point. First, consider whether it is only for the pure love of God you are making the decision, and carefully exclude any other motive. Secondly, imagine yourself advising some one else situated exactly like yourself, for whose perfection you care, and follow yourself the advice you would give that person. Thirdly, imagine yourself at the point of death. I went through this retreat, you would say then; what ought I to have resolved on that occasion? What other resolutions should I have made to enforce that resolution? Lastly, consider, at the particular judgment what should I then desire my resolution to have been?

God intends this retreat to be a fresh starting-point. We may not have to touch the substance of the day, but to make a great change in the *manner*, in which we do all the duties of the day, that they may be done more distinctly for God and in a more perfect way.

St. Ignatius puts before us three classes of men, in order that we may test our own earnestness. Each class has a sum of ten thousand ducats, and the question is whether it is God's Will that these ducats should be kept or renounced. Those in the first class say, "I should like to be in peace with God, but I

am not going to take any steps at all in order to find out whether He wants me to keep the ducats. I mean to keep them." Those in the second class say, "I do wish to be in peace with God, but He must suit Himself to me, I can't undertake to suit myself to Him. I am prepared to do a great deal, but in my own way. I will spend the money on good objects, but I cannot give it up." Perhaps the giving it up is exactly what God wants! The third class say, "I am prepared to do anything God wishes. I am first to be detached from the money, so that I may not be biassed; I will put it by for a bit as if it were given up, and listen to what God says before I fetch it back." This is the way in which we should act. We must be simply honest and consider what will give us a quiet conscience for the future. We are not talking about sins now, but about a quiet conscience. We must give God *what He asks for*.

To help us to determine the life we are to lead henceforth, St. Ignatius gives us the three degrees of humility.

FIRST DEGREE.—Not for all that the world can give, would I consent to *deliberate* about offending God by mortal sin. This is all that is needed for sacramental absolution. What would you say of a soldier who deliberated whether he should betray his general? If I *deliberate* whether I should commit a mortal sin, I commit a mortal sin.

SECOND DEGREE.—Not to deliberate about committing a venial sin; the state of indifference is included in this. If I have not indifference (I don't mean insensibility) about having hard things said

of me, is it likely that I shall not, should occasion arise, save my reputation by telling a lie? This is a choice we are bound to make if we are in this degree; it is not necessary for salvation. Is not God good? Ought not His goodness to lead us to generosity?

THIRD DEGREE.—When two courses are equal, and equally to God's honour and my salvation, from one consideration only, and that the resemblance to my Lord and Master and out of love for Him, I prefer what is the poorer and the more contemptible, that so I may be like Him.

Am I going to try and rise to the second degree? If I don't aim at it, I shall be sure to fall lower. I must frequently aim at acquiring that indifference to creatures. Can you look at the third, or would you be satisfied without doing so? If we could promote the second to be the highest, we might be in peace; but should you be really satisfied to know that there is a higher state, but that not one act of it you would ever make? St. Peter fell from the habitual state of grace once, yet he returned to it immediately. A person may really live habitually in the second degree; practically I don't see how people can frequent the sacraments and not do so.

Have we anything to do with the third degree? Why not? We must aspire to it. Let us try and choose that which is *more* humble, *more* poor, for our Saviour's sake. Some will say, "Poverty! I have no control over it at all. I can make two ends meet, but that is all." Why should you not be glad that it is so? There is the poverty that is begrudged, and the poverty that is loved. If the poor man loves his poverty for the

sake of Jesus, there is sanctity ; he loses nothing by its being an enforced poverty. Or if you are wealthy, try every now and then to practise yourself in acts of poverty, *e.g.*, “ I might have my carriage, but to-day I will go on foot and be like my Lord ;” or, “ Here is a thing I should like to buy and might quite well afford, but I won’t.” Have your minds turned towards the third degree, making little plans of exercising it from time to time, as for instance in not having a choice as to the people you are with ;—the poor have not. I do not like my neighbour, she tires me ; take the trial in a spirit of poverty. Or as regards places, rich people can go to nice places and enjoy themselves, but I have to stay at home. Well, the poor have to do it ; why shouldn’t I be glad of it, because I have the opportunity of making an act of poverty ? It may be attained without any exterior change, except that you seem to others to be taking things more easily than usual. Humiliations ! Some one cuts me out ; that makes me more like our Lord ; Barabbas was preferred to Him. It is not pleasant to have done one’s best, and some one else to have done much better without any effort at all. In conversation I am desperately inclined to tell a good story, and it is not necessary that I should ; I put it off, out of a motive of humility. You get a contradiction ; say nothing ; offer the contradiction to our Lord and be glad. Check curiosity for His sake, not merely because it is good for your soul, but because you are keeping in your proper place and learning to be humble. Practise submission and subjection to others, try to be subservient. Imagine yourself to be the

inferior of your servants. A young lady who has been mortified in society vents her temper on her maid, and finds fault with half-a-dozen things that she could not do so well herself. In some way every one is your superior. Your maid can work better than you. Get into the habit of regarding others as your superiors, and let at all events one act of the third degree of humility be done every day.

SIXTH DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

WHAT a rest it was this morning to find ourselves with our Redeemer ! This afternoon we have been asking what He wanted, and after the attraction of this morning we felt that we could refuse Him nothing ; and we saw that what He wanted was that we should love Him so much, we should see how we could imitate Him. Having this before us and an outline at least of what He wants, we turn to the consideration of His Passion, that we may have it all confirmed in us. The love of humiliation we have found in Him is more clear in His Passion than we have seen it yet. To confirm us in our resolve to love and to imitate Him, we are going to see what we have cost Him. Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction—what have all the sacraments cost my Lord ? What has it cost Him that

there should be any efficiency in my act of contrition ?

Take as the key to the Passion our Lord's Agony in the Garden.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the garden ; its entrance soon after we have left the brook, up the valley ; the place where He leaves the eight disciples ; and then again the place where He leaves the three. Under the olive trees He prayed.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I will ask that I may be attuned to the Sacred Heart, that I may be afflicted and sorrowful with Jesus. He goes to His Passion for me. May He touch my dull cold heart that what I see in His Heart I may feel in mine.

Judas has gone to sell his Master. He knows the place. Jesus is accustomed to pray there. That garden must have belonged to some brave friend who gave over the use of it to Him. Judas knew He would go there ; Christ knew Judas would come there to find Him. He has formed the habit of praying in that place : His repugnance that a treacherous disciple should find Him there did not interfere with His fidelity to His habit. “Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He went forth.” St. John, looking into His Sacred Heart, discerns the force of His Sacred Will and puts it on record. To the three He enjoins that they should “watch and pray,” whilst He goes “yonder” to pray. He works a wonderful miracle. In consequence of the union of His soul with the Divinity He could enjoy the Beatific Vision. He had this privilege, that when He so willed He could gaze upon the Divinity. Yet He chose to create in Himself a capability of suffering. Those

who are absorbed in prayer even are insensible—an absorption far below that of the Beatific Vision. He chose to hold back from His soul that which the Beatific Vision was calculated to impart. Perfect innocence requires that the reason should entirely control the passions ; He lets loose on His soul those passions of weariness, disgust and repugnance that we should have to endure. Did He not tell us that we should never be called on to bear anything that He had not borne ? This is an agony that would have killed Him, had He not prevented it from doing so. It manifests itself in His countenance ; and so He enters into prayer. These passions are to inundate His soul. He will take His Passion as His own free act. He begins to suffer. The common feeling is that He differs from us because He is God ; precisely because He is God, He suffers infinitely more than we can ever suffer. Mary suffered more than any other woman can suffer. Her agony took place at the foot of the Cross, when her life was preserved miraculously. All suffering in its intensity our Lord endured Himself ; His Divinity increases it ; His love is the priest that immolates Him. The Divinity supports Him, so that He may be capable of bearing it. He gazes on the Divinity for the knowledge that is to be drawn from It to His human soul. He foretold His Passion with its details. He will prepare now for it by casting it all on His soul. Every suffering is present at once. We know how much worse mental pain is than physical ; the soul is so much more tender than the body. All the Passion is concentrated on His soul. No one ever had a knowledge

like that. He had present to Him the sufferings of all those whom He loved. He sees every heart and every soul, every particle of suffering that would be endured by His elect up to the last martyrdom. He sees all the torments that would be inflicted in Japan and England for the Faith. His martyrs singly, personally, were all present to His Sacred Heart. How He loved each one! And those who have themselves to conquer, who must pass through a great deal of suffering in order to subdue themselves—their pain and their history are clear before Him. That which is successive to the individual He bears at once. The shame of going to confession, the pain of amendment, were borne by Him. And it is not the suffering of the good alone that He feels, but that of the whole human race. He feels the pain of Adam, the remorse of Cain, the death of Abel, even the natural pains, the millions of deaths, what it is to live in labour and hardships, to sicken and to die of hunger and thirst, of want and poverty,—all these pains are present to Him, and He loves each suffering soul with the love of a true friend, and the hardest part of its suffering He takes Himself. There is a concentration of woe in the Heart of Jesus which He could not bear but for His Divinity.

But greater to Him than any other burden is the weight of sin. He is there representing the whole human race; the sins of mankind are laid on Him; and this not in general terms, but each sin of each individual is placed on Him, each sin with all its base ingratitude, meanness and vileness. We know what it is to have remorse for sin. That horror and shame

which we feel is but a very small portion of the real horror that belongs to that sin. He saw each sin as though there were no other. He felt each sin as no one else could ever feel it. Who else can know fully what sin is? The dignity of God and the meanness of the sinner—who can measure the distance between them? Even Mary cannot conceive the extreme malice of sin. No other human soul could have that knowledge, or that intense love of God against whom the sin was committed. There was a pain for each sin proportioned to the knowledge He had of the wickedness of sin. These sins have become His sins. It is His sanctity that causes Him to shrink; these vile things are a burden touching His very soul. Thus we can see how it was that when He prayed the blood came bursting forth.

Yet what was this suffering compared with the loss of God? The pains of hell got hold upon me. He came to take the punishment of sin, and that punishment is hell. The wrath of God was transferred to Him. When He raised His eyes to Heaven, Heaven was hidden. His eyes rested only on sin. Then came the sense of abandonment. Men had rejected God; God would reject them and therefore Him. One mortal sin was enough to create that agony, to make Him the rejected, the outcast, and He has all the sins of the whole human race laid upon Him, every sin of mine, mortal and venial. Only He could have atoned for the smallest venial sin. This was what it cost the Eternal Son that we might be the children of God!

There is a bitterer drop in His chalice of sorrow.

He has taken the weight of our sins on Him. It would have been enough to have made one act of love, but He has taken this pain on Himself voluntarily. Why? That we might learn how He loves us, that we might learn that there is no limit to His love. And yet men will not believe it; even good men, those who have had great graces bestowed on them, still will not trust Him; they grieve Him by their diffidence, and have their way of rejecting Him. Often they reject Him by their infidelities to grace; they *will* fall short continually of what He destines them to be, and think little of taking the least perfect way. He sees how He sheds His Precious Blood to the last drop and in vain; His love is refused. Men will go on sinning, with the ingratitude of knowing that they are sinning against Him. He loves all so dearly that He would die for them anew. He sees how they throw away their souls and cast aside His graces, and prefer their sins to the Redemption, which has cost Him so much.

When the angel came to console Him, what could have been the consolation he offered? What comfort could the creature bring to his Creator? The needs of those who would love Him, though He knew how many would not. For the sake of those He knew would love Him, He would give all His Precious Blood. He looks forward to the day when I should need grace; He loves me; because of the sins that He sees in me He knows that I need Him the more, and He looks to me for consolation. And this is the consolation—that I should use His graces, accept His salvation, enter into the Heaven He has

purchased, give up my waywardness, my independence and my pride. Oh, is it possible I should disappoint the longing Heart of Jesus ?

SIXTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE SCOURGING AND CROWNING WITH THORNS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Represent to yourself a courtyard in Pilate's palace, a column which serves for the flagellation, a stone on which He sits for the crowning.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask that you may feel with Him.

The scourging was so terrible, first from natural reasons. Pilate was anxious not to have the guilt of the death of Christ, but he did not want to offend the Jewish people ; he sought every possible means to avoid either alternative, and each device caused our Lord much more pain. Time-serving people cause God more pain than the openly bad people. If Pilate had been downrightly wicked, he would have sentenced our Lord at once ; as it was, he subjected Him to the outrages in Herod's court and to the scourging that should be just short of death—a punishment so awful that in the Jewish law only forty stripes were allowed. These soldiers are men who delight in cruelty and blood, such as we could scarcely find now. They know that the Jews, some of whom were wealthy, would be pleased with their cruelty. And there is also the supernatural

reason that those men are animated by evil spirits who are taking delight in their wickedness. This is the way in which the devils use men in their outrages against God. They can carry out their evil wills by deputy, whilst this world lasts; yet all the while they are bringing about God's divine purposes and their own downfall. When a passion takes possession of any one, he will work out his own destruction by it.

We are looking now at the combat of devils and men against our Lord, Who is fighting alone our battle. There is the Precious Blood lying in streams on the ground. The walls, the scourges, the uniforms of the soldiers are covered with the Precious Blood; men are trampling it under foot. Look back at Gethsemane; there too the Precious Blood has been lying tranquil beneath the olives, the angels venerating it. When He rose from prayer, His garment was soaked with blood. There was blood on His sacred face when He rose to meet the traitor, and when Judas kissed Him and put his hand on the shoulder of Jesus, his lips were dyed in blood and his right hand, that was to receive the money. This is the way that our Lord permits His Blood to be treated. As He goes to Calvary, the footprints are left, left in blood, and that in the midst of a crowd of men who disregard it, and it is borne about by the feet of men. He allowed it to be so treated, for He knew how it would be despised; He knew that many would prefer any amusement to the graces that were purchased by the Precious Blood.

Look at Him in His crowning. Hitherto the soldiers have acted under orders; now they act of

themselves, and they mock Him. They had heard Him say He was a King, and they put a scarlet robe on Him, and give Him a reed for a sceptre ; others plait the thorns and place the crown roughly upon His head, and with blows drive the thorns in, and they bow and salute Him, patient, meek, adorable as ever. From the devils this suggestion came, so the devils mock that homage which they are forced to pay in reality.

Is He not our King? We have no King but Jesus. This is the moment of His coronation : He is crowned King for us. More venerable, more wonderful when thus crowned, speaking more to our hearts, claiming more our love, being more the king who should take possession of our hearts than at any previous moment of His life. Where should He reign but in our hearts? Have I been content that He should take possession of His Kingdom? That heart of mine belongs to Him. I see Him, a King, mocked, stripped, scourged, scorned, and I am still hesitating whether I can manage to make some tiny act of the third degree of humility once a day. Are the subjects to be unlike their King? I am His. I must take Him as He is, with His robe, sceptre and crown. What prayer am I to make except His own—Thy Kingdom come, O Lord, Thy Kingdom come.

SEVENTH DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

THE CRUCIFIXION.

THE third week of the exercises is one of immense importance. It brings before us the Passion in detail, until it has been all gone through; and then there is a whole day to be spent in one unbroken meditation, and the force of that coming at the end of the week is something astounding.

Try and spend this time in the spirit which befits the contemplation of the Passion. Accompany our Blessed Lord after the crowning with thorns. See that great stair-case leading up to Pilate's palace, up which He passed and from the top of which He was shown to the people. Then the Via Dolorosa, the city gate, the road, Golgotha—a raised ground, hardly a hill, a garden beneath in which a sepulchre has been hewn; and ask, "Lord, let me follow Thee, let me be Thy companion."

We are there when our Lord is brought out in His purple robe, with blood flowing over His face, a spectacle to angels and to me. There He stands so meek and gentle, the Lamb for the slaughter. Amongst the multitudes are here and there His enemies of higher rank and station, and those who had been cured by Him and fed by Him, the greater

part having friends who had received benefits at His hand now turning against Him and clamouring for His death. "They feared the people." They need not; the people were changeable enough. He had raised Lazarus from the dead—that was the miracle which brought about the Passion. Judas's resolution was taken when Mary poured the ointment the second time. All these people and Pilate we see. Pilate utters the words, "Behold the man." What a humiliation! The Son of God, who has come down to bring a Gospel to men, stands there as a detected impostor; one who for blasphemy has deserved to die, whose case is so clear that the whole multitude can cry out, "He is guilty of death;" a criminal against divine law; one who has claimed to be God. What a depth of humiliation! When some one is preferred to us, or we are slighted, and we know not how to bear it, let us love Him Who was humbled for our sake, and ask that He will please to admit us to a little share of His cross.

"We will not have this man!"—the cry of human independence against God. Pilate has placed Barabbas by Christ in hopes that they might choose Christ. "Not this man but Barabbas!"—a choice that has been made, oh, so often! And Pilate passes his sentence that Jesus of Nazareth, calling Himself king, having been scourged, should be crucified. An order was given by Pilate to write the title that should be fixed to His cross. His own garment is put on Him again, the purple robe having been roughly torn off Him, and He passes down the steps and He finds the cross. The cross had been

got ready before the sentence was pronounced, and was at the foot of the stairs. He puts it on His shoulders and draws it lovingly to Himself. He loves His cross.

He begins His weary way. The night before a whole cohort had been sent to apprehend Him, but now it is no longer wanted. Four soldiers are enough. There are two thieves as well—three men carrying crosses. The thief can carry his cross ; he had had no agony, no sleepless night of torture, no friend to kiss and betray him and another to deny him ; he had no scourging, no sharp crown of thorns ; his cross is a light burden for him ; but our Lord falls. Look at the people trying to get a sight, Mary waiting, St. John beside her. She hears the evil things that are said, she sees the procession coming on, just like one of the ordinary executions. First she sees a thief, then Jesus with His crown of thorns and the blood flowing from the wounds made by the cruel thorns. How He is defiled ! That face she loved so dearly is covered with dust and dirt. Their eyes meet, and each can read the other's heart. She is not allowed to approach Him ; she must wait. She and John follow. Look at all those shouting people going on before, and Mary following in His footsteps, more like to Him than ever mortal was. And there are the dear women of Jerusalem, whose husbands and brothers have been calling out against Him, and He, ever mindful of His own, turns to them, feeling even then the woes and pains others have to bear.

They are at the gate of the city. People are

coming in for the Pasch and meet this little procession. Jesus falls a third time, and then Simon is called to bear the cross. All unconscious Whose it is, and begrudgingly at first, Simon takes upon his shoulders the cross by which the world is to be redeemed, the cross already stained with Precious Blood. Simon carries it, and a grace comes to him. How often is it so with us ! At last it becomes a dear cross, and we may press it to us, the cross of our divine Redeemer.

At last they come to Calvary. His garment is taken from Him, the soldiers disputing for it ; and Jesus is told to lie down on His cross, and He is obedient to these people who command Him ; though it is the cruellest injustice, He obeys. He puts His arm on the cross as they tell Him to do, and they drive the nail right through His hand into the wood of the cross ; and they nail His left hand and then His feet ; and on His head is placed the crown of thorns, and above is the title cut in three languages. They drop the cross into the hole prepared for it, and there is a thrill of agony for Jesus. He is saying all the while, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," making excuses for them, finding a reason for their pardon. " If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." But there have been many who have known and have crucified Him afresh.

They are mocking Him—" Let Him come down from the cross," the two thieves siding with the people. The thieves are fastened to their crosses with cords : crucifixion was a death of exhaustion—

not a speedy death. In the midst of the mockery and derision of the mob, one thief is converted—the grandest conversion on record ! When all the world is against Him, as having been discovered in His imposture and crucified for having claimed to be what He was not, then the thief can turn and take his Saviour's part. “ We indeed justly,” “ Lord, remember me ”—the pattern of a humble prayer. If all shall be against Thee, yet will not I. “ O Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Then our Lord answers him, granting ten thousand times more than he dare ask, as our Lord always does : “ *This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*” My companion as on the cross, so in Paradise ! No need to say another word. Can we imagine ecstasy compared to that of the thief, when having heard these words he was allowed to hang on the cross ?

Now our Lord turns to His Mother. The thief has had precedence—is not that His way always ? The poor prodigal is put first, the other son is told, “ I am always with Thee.” Mary's chalice is full. He says, “ Behold thy son ; ” and He is speaking of another than Himself. She is losing her Son, and she is gaining another son—one for whom Jesus dies and whose sins have brought Him to this death. How our Lord loves us, giving His own Mother to be the Mother of us all. Those pains at the foot of the cross were the throes whereby we became children of Mary. She associates us with Mount Calvary, and when we call her Mother, we bring back to her the memory of those words, the accents of that voice in which He bade her be a Mother to us all.

He shows us His Heart. "My God, my God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ?" So that agony which began in the garden has continued. He was so gentle throughout His Passion ; yet all the while this desolation was in His soul, and the Father, Whom He loved with a perfect love, seemed to have abandoned Him.

All this was quite at the beginning of the Crucifixion. Then there is a silence lasting three hours, and a darkness, and the veil of the temple is rent and the tombs are opened. A fear falls on men's hearts. They who were exulting are smitten to the heart, and compunction seizes on them ; they beat their breasts and are full of consternation. The silence is broken by the words, "I thirst." He is burning with fever caused by the loss of blood, and His Mother and His friends cannot help Him. How the word pierces their hearts ! One of the soldiers brings a sponge and vinegar, but who shall bring a sponge to the Heart that is thirsting for the souls of men, and that will not be satisfied so long as there is one who will not come ? Can no one help ? Is there nothing we can do ? Nothing to assuage the the thirst of our Redeemer's Heart ? Can we not be watchful and look out for occasions when we may do good to souls ? Instead of amusing ourselves, let us think how we can help others. Shall I not be asked, "What have you done for them ? Did you show them love ? Had you any desire for their salvation ? Were you willing to go the least bit out of your way to help them ?"

Now it is finished. The redemption was complete

in the first act of love after the Incarnation, but the prodigality of His love was not complete till He had rendered it impossible for us to entertain any diffidence of Him. Then, when He said, "It is consummated," He declared it was impossible that any should doubt of the completeness of this redemption.

That great moment has come when the soul must leave the body. Now He is to die, and so He teaches us the manner. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." He has passed through His desolation. It *was*, "My God;" *now* it is the name of the Father that He invokes. So always this is the one thing we have to learn. God is my Father, Who watches over me, makes allowances for me, forgives me, gives graces far more bountifully than I can imagine through life, and still more at the moment of my death; so that then too I may say with my dying Lord, "With whom am I safe if not with my Father?"

SPIRITUAL READING—*seventh day*—Imitation of Christ, II., 12; IV., 8.

PATRON—St. Aloysius.

EXAMEN—Do I get up quickly and devoutly?

Do I go to bed in proper time and piously?

Do I work diligently for God?

C O N F E R E N C E .

SEVENTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

INDULGENCES. THE HEROIC ACT. HOLY COMMUNION.

IF your rosary has the Dominican blessing, there is 100 days' indulgence for each bead. It is a good plan always after Holy Communion to pray for the Pope's intention and make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament to serve for all the plenary indulgences you may be able to gain. If it is a festival day, you may gain more than one plenary indulgence probably. The rule is that when the condition is one that according to the ordinary rule of the Church cannot be repeated, such as going to Holy Communion, that suffices; but conditions that can be repeated should be—alms, prayers in succession, for instance. No exact number of prayers is required. Five *Paters* and *Aves* for the Pope's intention is generally considered sufficient for a plenary indulgence. Partial indulgences are easier to gain, because they do not require the same dispositions. No one can tell whether he has gained a plenary indulgence, whether he is sufficiently detached from venial sin.

It is a delicious devotion to give all our indulgences

to the Holy Souls. It takes our minds out of ourselves. We get larger hearts in all that concerns God. Aim at having a large heart. Get rid of partisanship. Never make differences worse. Find excuses for the conduct of others. Never say how hard, cruel or unjust that was. Never remember such things. The way to get a blessing for those we care for is to be very charitable. Don't be narrow-minded. Look at the good everywhere. Rejoice in all that is going on for the glory of God. It frightens me lest that ancient spirit of division should revive again amongst us.

To return to our indulgences. The Franciscan indulgence—that of the Stations of the Cross—is not dependent on the pictures. When you can't go to a church, your crucifix does instead, if blessed. For those who cannot say the whole devotion, twenty *Paters*, *Aves* and *Glorias* do instead with the prayer, "We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood," and an act of contrition.

It would be well to make the heroic act for the souls in Purgatory, involving heroic generosity.* It should not be done in a hurry. We get by it a higher place in Heaven, we exchange the temporal for the eternal. One act of generosity may bring us to another, and that again to a third, and so a habit of heroic virtue may be produced in us. Why should heroism be for others, not for me? Why should we not be heroes? Would you not rather stop in Purgatory till the Judgment Day, if so you could get one

* For further information see *The Heroic Act*, by Father Morris. Catholic Truth Society. Price one penny.

degree higher in heaven, nearer to God for eternity, a clearer sight of God, a deeper love of God? What we are here for is to gain a greater knowledge of God, a greater nearness to God in our future life. It does not matter what it costs, I will aim at it. Our Lord calls on us to take up His work. He introduced a new idea—that of vicarious suffering. This is the idea He has come to plant in our hearts (reparation enters into the same category). We do not see the fruit, which is another good thing. A soul entering heaven sooner through us is analagous to the salvation of a soul here. To think we can make those souls our own!

A word about not missing Holy Communion. The more frequently you can get leave to go to communion the better for you. When you are going to receive our Lord, take an eager disposition. Would you mind leaving behind that fear which sometimes induces you to lose the sacramental presence of our Lord? What are His terms? No one is to come who is not in a state of grace. If there be a solid doubt, yes, I think reverence should induce you to abstain—a *solid doubt as to whether you are in mortal sin*; but do not stay away for anything else. As to dispositions—if you are conscious even of a deliberate venial sin, do not lose your communion. Holy Communion is one means of remitting the guilt of venial sin. If you have no opportunity of confession, you should go to communion all the same. Take extra pains on such a day. You do not usually go to our Lord direct for forgiveness of sins, but you can do so. Make very deliberate acts of contrition. The

result might be that you would make a better communion than usual.

The past is never judged by present light. That my conscience is more enlightened than it was, makes a difference for the future, not for the past. A fresh retrospect of past life is a question for the confessor, not for the penitent. So also is the frequency of communion. If your confessor says three times a week, and you only go twice, you will not have got your proper food ; your scruples and your ignorance have made you miss it. Who are you that you are to revise the theology of the Catholic Church ? Take it as God gives it. Your consciousness of infidelity to grace should induce you to make your preparation in a devout mood. People will go on doubting all through mass whether they are fit to receive the Blessed Sacrament, instead of spending their time in devotion. What can be more absurd ?

Our Lord always gives grace in Holy Communion. If a person receives it in a state of insensibility, that person receives sanctifying grace. It is a mere matter of discipline, like giving Holy Communion to infants, or under both species. Sacraments always confer grace when there is no obstacle. The paltriness of the disposition is not an obstacle. If a sick person has to be roused from sleep to receive Holy Communion and drops asleep again, our Lord does His work notwithstanding.

When you feel tepid in your preparation for Holy Communion, ask our Lord to come and work a grand miracle of grace in you. I am resolved I never will lose my communions, I need them. Others more

fervent may spare a communion, but I can't afford it ; one less makes a grave difference to me. I go, not because I am fit, but because I am a poor wretched soul who stands in need of all God's gifts. My consciousness of infidelities, negligences and tepidity shall not keep me away. Because I am cold, where shall I go but to the fire ? He came to kindle it. Of all the cold damp places my heart is the worst. My heart is the one that has most need of this divine Fire to warm it.

SEVENTH DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

THE ENTOMBMENT AND THE RESURRECTION.

HE is dead, and all is changed. Though He hangs there lifeless, His side can be pierced, and the spear enters Mary's riven heart, and she sees the last drops of His Blood poured forth. There is the mystery of Mary continuing to suffer now that the battle was won, and Jesus was at rest. Mary and John mingled in the fight with Him and continue in it. That which is wanting in the sufferings of Christ in each of His members is to be carried out in them. Mary is the first to witness the opening of His Heart ; then John and Magdalene and the holy women ; these all had their share in the grand merit of having been faithful to Him at the foot of the cross. Timid souls, who had served Him in secret, gain now a bravery they had not before.

Leave is obtained from Pilate to remove His body. It is taken down and placed in the lap of His Mother. She sees now what the Passion has been, how the thorns have torn His brow, how deep the wounds no kind hand had touched. The whole of the Passion is imprinted on the heart of Mary, and the memory of all she suffered beneath the cross is present to her throughout her life. She had borne Him in her arms when He was a child; so now He is in her arms again. The human love was assumed into the divine; therefore her sorrow was so lasting. All through her life, all through eternity, Calvary will be present to her, Calvary without pain, with the halo round it of the glory of God that has been purchased there.

How tenderly they lift Him! She lets them anoint Him, though she knows the best anointing was the Precious Blood. He is placed in the tomb, and the stone rolled against it, and sealed, and the soldiers guard it, and Mary has to go home with John, and feel the truth of that word spoken from the cross that her Son was dead, and another son was put in His place. Can we not imagine how, when they arrived at the house, Mary turned and rewarded John with a look of love, a mother's love, the sorrow in her heart not causing her to forget that he was her son, and that she must console and strengthen him. She has a room perhaps in the house where the Blessed Sacrament was instituted, underneath that "upper room:" we may make acquaintance in heaven with the man to whom that house belonged. What a contrast now between the Mother and the Son! A little while ago they were sharing each other's sorrows, and now they

are parted, and in what different circumstances! She in solitude and expectation separated from Him, with all the memories of the Passion unassuaged; our Lord with every pain and sorrow ended; the great miracle He had been working all His life of preventing the joys of the Beatific Vision from inundating His soul, now ceasing utterly and for ever; His human soul coming into full possession of the joys which He had merited. The instant He comes into Limbo it becomes a paradise; those who see Him become possessed of the Beatific Vision. It comes through Him, as all good things must. What a company! Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from whom God would give Himself a name, Joseph the Patriarch, Moses, Josue, David, the prophets, St. John Baptist and St. Joseph are all collected there. They have been waiting—oh, how long the waiting has seemed!—and at last He comes. In the midst of their jubilations there enters a poor thief; he has been hanging by the lifeless body, and has passed through a rapid and painful death, for they had broken his bones. Does he come in timidly? Our Lord turns to him and welcomes him. This is he who gave Him that supremest consolation, that when He hung upon the cross He might absolve and save. He is now one amongst that multitude in Paradise. He had asked to be remembered, and this is the fashion of our Lord's remembrance.

Not till Easter morning does our Lord take the holy souls from that prison-house. Then they go with Him, passing through the rock, the soldiers all unconscious, and He shows them His sacred body,

cold, wan, white, torn, bruised, as It lies there, as It has been left by those holy, tender, reverent hands ; and they all adore It, and now they see more of that which their redemption has cost their Lord. He gives His body now those qualities He will give to their bodies. It can be touched, but it can pass through the stone like a spirit, and pass from place to place. How can it be passible when It sees God? It can never die again. Its glory at present He veils. The Precious Blood is brought back again. The Heart that was like a field on which a battle has been fought and won, but where all is calm and still in the night-time—that Heart comes to life again, to feel longing desires to be gratified by those who will look on those desires as a law and return Him love for love. He goes with the souls to visit Mary. Now they are free, they would come to see her—Eve to see the second Eve,—and those who have prefigured her, Esther, Rebecca, Ruth, Judith, etc. ; and those in the royal pedigree who were saints, they all pass with reverence before Mary ; and the King enters, and they leave Him, that the interview with Mary may have no witnesses, though they can see because their eyes are set on God, and in God they see these mysteries that pass.

The consolation has come at last—an unselfish one, as the sorrow had been unselfish. All His suffering is over now, and Mary gazes on Him, rejoicing in His triumph. She would cast herself at His feet, but He raises her up and presses her to His Heart. What the Heart of Jesus had to say to the heart of Mary, who shall know? In the consolation of that moment

she lives on for fifteen years. Is not her work done? May she not go now? No, she must live on for fifteen long years, during which she shall assist at the mass John will say, receiving Him in Holy Communion who was hers by the closest tie that could bind any soul to Him. Fifteen long years! Yet they passed like a shadow by virtue of the consolation of that day.

And now He has other friends to console, and I am sure that the one to whom He next appeared was not Magdalene, but one associated with Mary—John. And Mary had prepared him for this grace. John, who was near Mary, was nearer Jesus, but John has caught a likeness to his Mother, and as Mary was silent so was John.

Jesus reveals Himself to Magdalene by one single word in the voice that had touched her heart before. He checks her eagerness with a promise that in heaven she shall be near enough to touch Him.

The holy women meanwhile have told the apostles that the tomb is empty. Peter and John go to the tomb, John not going in, not knowing where he may see his Master next; Peter going in to the tomb.

Our Lord must come and console those downcast apostles, who are shut up by fear, not knowing what was to happen, and feeling that all their hopes were falsified. Two have gone in the morning to Emmaus. He must see them all, console them all, instruct them all. There we leave our contemplation for the present, our next will be Emmaus. We will try to accompany Him and see some of the great scenes of those forty days.

I said in the beginning of our retreat that it should be a cheerful one. I have cared that it should be earnest, that we should see really high virtue, so that we may make resolves that may influence our lives, and we shall find the way to keep them if we enter into the joy of the Resurrection. Let us take our resolution into the world, not regarding it as a task we have to do, but as a pleasure ; while we look forward to the day when we shall see Him, and forget all it has cost us, except that the memory will be in the glory He gives us, bringing back to us the efforts we have made to tread in His footsteps, whilst in eternity we are mindful of the glory that comes to us through the triumph of our King.

SEVENTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

EMMAUS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The road to Emmaus. See where the branch from the main-road runs into the village ; the room in the hostelry where these two visitors entertained our Lord.

SECOND PRELUDE.—A prayer that I, who am apt to go astray after being associated intimately with Jesus Christ and am ever ready to be discouraged, may readily turn to Him and press Him to stay, even though it be so dark that I do not recognize Him.

Two of the disciples went away from the rest on

Easter morning ; they were so convinced that all was finished. They thought the rumours which they heard were not worth investigating—the stories of the women about the angels and the empty tomb. Two had been to the tomb, and had found it empty ; yet these disciples will not wait to see the truth, their depression is so great. They feel that there is no possibility of things coming right ; so they start. Our Lord sees they have gone, and He must go in search of them. Their eyes were holden, and they did not know Him ; no wonder, when they were in such a mood. He feigns as though He were a fellow traveller who had come there by chance, and He joins them. They were discoursing, and for all their depression they were talking of Jesus. He is never far off when two are talking of Him. “We thought it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.” He asks them questions ; this is His way of drawing our perplexities out of us. He likes us to come and tell Him all ; He knows—yes, but He wants us to tell Him. In sadness and desolation, can we not tell Him all about it ? When this sadness comes from wounded self-love, He will see how He can pour in a little humility. “What things ?” He asks, as though He did not know. There is a singular playfulness in our Lord after His Resurrection. They tell Him what they had “thought” about Jesus ; their ideas of worldly greatness. “This is the third day.” Is it not strange that the word “third” did not bring back what He had said ? What strange stories about Himself our Lord has heard ! especially what must He think of our complaining of Him as though He were

hard? "O fools"—they are in trouble, but He knows they have strength to bear this rebuke—"and slow!" Have we not been slow? What a long time it has taken us to reach the point where we are! Love ought to have given them the instinct to know Who was there. "Slow of heart." Magdalene knew Him by one word. Ah! but she was not slow of heart. He is near us, talking to us, but we do not know Him, and we lose the precious, precious time through our slowness.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" How much more than His members! Do they need no penance, no suffering? Can they do without pain? The cross of Christ leads them into Christ's own glory. Whatever be the kind of suffering, whether bodily or mental pain, if they would not be foolish and slow of heart, but look upon it as Christ's suffering and cross, it would lead them on to His glory. It is a glory to Him when we suffer in love and in union with Him: it brings us on to where He is.

Then He expounds the Scriptures. He gives them new lights upon the word of God. Who could not have made a meditation after that? So they go along, and He is kindling the fire; it is all He cares for. "Was not our heart burning within us?"

Emmaus is close by. He makes believe He is going on, and says good-bye. He will leave them, He wants to draw out of them a prayer that He should remain. And they "constrained Him." It is impossible to them that He should go. Oh, the force of the will contained in the word "constrained"! Why should not we with our faith and knowledge

have a strong, firm, consistent will? What could ever withstand that? Can a resolution be broken when a will like that exists? He comes to give it to us. We know He is there, and that surely is enough.

“Remain with us.” Oh the lovely prayer! Life is flying on; death is coming. “Remain with us, O Lord.” Are thoughts like these to grow cold and dull? No, rather by recourse to prayer and the Holy Eucharist we will constrain Him to remain, and the fire shall grow warmer within our hearts. He must never go; we cannot spare Him.

So they enter Emmaus, the Shepherd and His wandering sheep. They go to the inn and ask for supper. That inn-keeper little knew Who was entering his inn. What an amount of blindness there is in the world! He had bought that bread, little conceiving the use to which God would put it. God comes to make such use of man’s creatures. If we had but keen sight so as to know Him, how much we should gain!

The two disciples are entertaining our Lord. They have altered now, they have learnt His heavenly wisdom. “Ought not Christ to have suffered?” It was a novelty to them; they were thinking of temporal glory, they were regular Jews, and this idea was strange to them. Their hearts go on burning at the suggestion that there is sanctity in suffering, and that it can lead to glory. They perceive what He is doing, and light begins to dawn on them. He takes bread and wine and water; they have heard of this before. The apostles had told how He had communicated them, how He had fed them, what had

been the last and greatest token of His love. When they see Him now and He begins to pray—to say perhaps that *Pater* which the Church has always said—taking the bread and saying, “The night when I was betrayed I took bread and blessed it and said, ‘This is my Body ;’” and then the chalice—“‘This is my Blood,’”—how they must have sunk on their knees ! And holding in His sacred hands This which He has transubstantiated, and rising, He turns to each and gives them their communion. And so they make their First Communion after what a day ! with what a preparation ! Down-cast, cold ; but now with hearts on fire they have received Him. When He is in their hearts, there is no further need of His visible presence.

How large a portion of that Easter-day He gave to them ! The only two who broke away, the most foolish—these are the two that He has brought to His communion.

These two disciples, who had come to Emmaus, towards evening rise at once and retrace their steps—just what He intended them to do. In Jerusalem are all the others who need their consolation, and they now have this much of likeness to our Lord, that as He has consoled them they must console others. In the strength of that communion they rise and go, until they come to the city of God. They go first to some disciples who will not believe them, and then to the apostles, who say, “Yes, it is true ; Christ has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Whilst they are speaking, our Divine Redeemer appears again with His Easter salutation, “Peace be to you.”

We have food here for many meditations. The love with which He seeks these poor souls, the graces He has in store for them, the way in which He prepares them, how like Him they can become ! Yes, and *in how short a time so great a work can be accomplished !*

EIGHTH DAY.

[9.45 A.M.]

OUR LORD APPEARING TO HIS APOSTLES BY THE
LAKE OF TIBERIAS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The lake of Tiberias. Imagine it first in the evening, the apostles with their nets launching their boats ; and then in the early morning and our Lord on the shore.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask for a great love of our Lord, a great confidence in Him Who comes to us in His own way, choosing when He shall come, that our eyes may open soon, that we may know Him, recognise Him and be eager in our love.

Angels tell the Apostles to go to Galilee. A great point is made of their going into Galilee, and yet almost all the recorded appearances of our risen Lord are not in Galilee but in Jerusalem. The Apostles remained there a whole week till Low Sunday—a week without Him. He was teaching them to walk alone. They keep the Pasch and then return to their own place, Galilee, until they are

told to do something else. After forty days they will have to go to Jerusalem, and He will tell them to wait there, and they are contented just to do what they are told.

Where was our Lord all that time? I think in Nazareth in His Mother's house with her. His mission was over; where should He go but to His Mother's house? She draws Him to her. There He lives with His impassible, immortal body. The goings to and fro are all over. Mere acts of His Will are enough now. To Mary what a time was that between the Resurrection and the Ascension of her Son—a preparation for the fifteen years that were to follow!

Our Lord does not tell His Apostles all they were to teach, because the Holy Ghost will come and guide them. When the Apostles should die, all truth would be committed to the Church to preserve, guided by the same Holy Spirit. Now, when they were at Capharnaum or Bethsaida doing their work, not idling, but filling up the whole day laboriously, St. Peter says, "I go fishing." Who is the first to answer? Thomas (it is John who writes it down). During that Easter week Thomas had been the kill-joy of the place. He had been absent when our Lord had appeared, and got into a temper at not having been there. He might as well have waited with them; being out of Peter's company is dangerous work. To look at his face was enough to make them miserable. They comfort him, they persuade him to be content to wait till our Lord chooses to come. The others are charitable, having seen our Lord, and can bear

with a poor downcast man. How they must have prayed for our Lord to come again! At length Thomas sees Him, and the clouds disappear. *Now* he is the first to speak when Peter says, "I go fishing;" "I go with thee," he says. And Bartholomew goes too, and the sons of Zebedee and two others; and so they go out together. When St. Peter goes fishing, it is worth our while to go with him, though there will be good rough work; but it is Peter's boat;—let us have a ready will, and fish in Peter's boat.

Here is a strange thing. Our Lord is risen, and He lets those seven apostles labour the whole night and catch nothing; and they are not downcast but quite cheerful, and God is just as much pleased as though they had been successful. *We* are disposed to measure God's pleasure by success. What has success to do with it, if I am doing God's Will?

St. Peter says, "We had better put to shore." They have dragged the water between them and the shore, and are sure there are no fish there. It is early morning. Our Lord likes the *early* morning. They see One standing on the beach, and He asks, "Children, have you any meat?" They answer, No. He bids them cast the net again. They did not yet know Him; there was one who is guessing, but even He is not sure. They cast the net and it is full. St. John now *knows*. "It is the Lord," he whispers. Those blessed whispers of St. John—would we had more of them! If you want a summary of the retreat, take these words, *Dominus est*—"It is the Lord." Are there not suggestions enough in them? When

He asks for anything, give it Him generously at once—it is the Lord. In trouble, if you can only remind yourself '*Dominus est*, how easy will it become! Ask St. John to remind you sometimes; he has such keen feeling, such a tender loving heart—oh, if he would get us a heart to find Jesus!

Peter at once casts himself into the sea; there are two hundred cubits between him and our Lord, and he is not going to wait for the boat dragging the fishes. When they get to shore, they find our Lord has prepared food for them. This is His way; if we would but *trust* Him, we should never want our dinner, we may be sure of that. And one of them counts the number of fishes in the net—one hundred and fifty-three large fishes, and St. John writes it down—the Holy Ghost told him to write it down. John is always watching his Lord's ways, trying to understand and to know Him, and so it was he loved so much.

So now Jesus is with them, just as He was before, serving them. There is nothing servile in serving, it is loving work. There will be little services to do in heaven: in this life we have the rudiments which will go on into eternity. Eight are sitting there; oh, if we could always eat and drink as though our Lord were present!

When the meal is over, Peter is to have his penance in the presence of the others. Four times he has seen our Lord and not heard one word of reproof. Though there is no excuse for what he did, just after his Holy Communion, in exposing himself to danger, thinking he was strong, going down amidst the servants

instead of keeping near our Lord as John did—yet, if one dared say it, it seemed worth while he should fall, to find out what our Lord was. If anything moves our Lord, it is hearty sorrow, thorough conversion. Peter might have stood beneath the cross, but he had learnt distrust of self through his fall. When Easter comes, instead of being backward he runs off to the sepulchre, if so be he might be the first to see Him.

“Simon, lovest thou Me more than these?” What, in the hearing of all to be asked whether it were *possible* any could have such a love as he had! “Lord, Thou knowest all things.” Our Lord must know a great deal to know all the secrets of my heart. Oh, if He might see there the honest love of Peter! “Feed my lambs”—the little ones—those who go astray, who want guarding. *He* says this who is about to ascend and will leave Peter in His stead. Has Peter ever forgotten it? Has he ever neglected to feed the lambs, *My* lambs? Yet our Lord repeats the question again. Surely the answer was sufficient, but He seems as though He did not believe. He will have it repeated, the words are sweet, a music that He loves. “Thou knowest that I love Thee.” Thou *knowest*. We must make sure it is true of us. Many things are tests whether or no we love Jesus. Do we trust Him? Do we hope in Him because He has promised to care for us? Do we love Him because He loves us?

“Feed my lambs.” Our Lord is determined the association shall exist in Peter’s mind; he is to be gentle, ready to forgive not seven times, but seventy

times seven. And yet once more, "Simon, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved, because He said it to him the third time." He had a sense of joy the first time, as we have when we have to be outspoken and declare that the love of God devours us. Did our Lord really doubt? He knew that love grows strong by practice, and here were three acts of love, each stronger than the former. And shall I make so few? Shall I not offer Him more frequent and more fervent acts of love?

"Feed my sheep." Now the whole flock is entrusted to Peter, the whole flock of Christ. These from whom the lambs are to derive their nourishment—all are entrusted to the care of Peter. If John had told us the names of those two other apostles in the boat, we should have known who were the four absent. I know they lost a great deal. They lost being the personal witnesses of our Lord's commission to St. Peter. They must take it on trust. I think in those few days there are lessons enough about keeping close to Peter.

And now the others go to look after the net, but Peter will not go away from his Master. John is looking wistfully; he did not know what his Master had to say to Peter—something perhaps about a time when he was faithful and Peter was not; but he cannot stand it long, and he follows them. Peter, absorbed in love, cares for all, and seeing John, asks, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" That was because he had had the most wonderful prophecy about his own death. "Simon, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where

thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. This He said signifying by what death he should glorify God." Men should do with him what they should choose. Was he to have a death like his Master's death? He thinks himself not worthy of that: he will beg his executioners to turn his head downwards, and let him so die. This prophecy about his death he has heard, and his heart is full; he was to go to his work with the sense of crucifixion on him, not understanding in full, but with the instinct in his heart. Our Lord will not tell him about John. "So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me." John, then, who tells the story, turns back again to his fishes and net, and Peter follows on with his Lord. Those long lives—how blessed they can be! "So I *will*"—on that it rests. If He wills it, let us remain. "But *follow Me.*" He has a personal will for each one. Come to Me, follow Me. *There* is the invitation for our lives. In that spirit of true loving confidence we may leave ourselves and follow Him.

CONFERENCE.

EIGHTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ALMSGIVING. SCRUPLES. MENTAL TEMPTATIONS.
MASS AND COMMUNION.

IN the matter of almsgiving all I have to say is, there is one thing I should care for more than alms, and that is the manner in which the poor are treated. There are few who have not opportunities of doing something for the poor and seeing them; they should try to make more opportunities. Show kindly feelings; take pains about the poor. Those who have rare opportunities should think what they can do, and see that the poor are not forgotten.

A scruple is a horrid thing. There is no good in it, though good may be got from it. It really is a trial. There are scrupulous people who are rather proud of being scrupulous. Obedience is the only remedy for scrupulosity. A *vain* fear takes possession of a person. If there is reason for a fear, it is not a scruple. By a scruple I mean a vague feeling of something wrong, I don't know what. I think I must have consented to a sin. Those fears often leave traces behind them,—that is the trial, the remains of a past feeling having no substance, the

impression remaining—this is a scruple and very painful. We must not act against a well-grounded fear ; there may be danger in such and such a thing, so I will leave it. Good ; but an indefinite fear of nothing in particular is bad. I feel afraid, and I don't know why I feel afraid—that is a scruple. It is best to face it and act as you would with a shying horse—tame him, quiet him, lead him up gently to the object he fears, and let him look at it. That is the way we must treat ourselves. If when going to Holy Communion (as I described yesterday) you have the feeling that you are not prepared, don't attend to the feeling. Am I certain there is a mortal sin?—that is the question.

With regard to mental temptations. There is no doubt sins can be committed internally. What is to be done? Avoid being frightened. The thing is often so bad that the mere fact of its being so bad so scares people that they get afraid. The badness proves that there is some one whispering it to us, and we are not responsible for that. Nothing can make it sin but full deliberation and consent ; pleasure may already be taken in it before we are conscious. It begins to be a sin when advertence comes. When conscience says, “That won't do, that is a sin,” then there comes responsibility, and not till then. We must prepare ourselves for it. I have been dwelling on an uncharitable thought ; at last it comes before me, “I am doing it, am I not?” Yes, then stop. Make an act of love, as short as you like, but as fervent as possible ; few words but much heart.

That removes you from the danger, and is much better than making contrary acts. We can always be prepared with this. Acts of love strengthen sanctifying grace: the repetition of those acts is the formation of a habit. Then turn quietly from the temptation to any distraction. In prayer of course you go back to prayer; otherwise take any occupation, and turn your mind to it, or any hobby may be very useful just then. If the devil were at his worst, and some one knocked sharply at the door, he would go in a minute. Supposing a thought continues, as it will do, at night, coming back and back, make always a fresh act of love again and again, and shew that you are on the Lord's side. Don't be afraid even if you have to do this six, seven, eight, nine times. Very few temptations can stand that. Enormous merit is to be got by it. If you never did anything else but that, you would get a reward in heaven.

A few words as to the manner of hearing mass. Our end is devotion. If prayer-books help you, use them, but it is better to walk alone. Try and get a method of your own. There is no harm in liking your own way in those things. We should teach children to use their own minds in prayer and hearing mass. If we take the four ends of sacrifice, we get changes. To-day I want thanksgiving, another time adoration, or impetration, or contrition; or I may take all four together.

Then in preparing for Holy Communion and in thanksgiving afterwards, make *acts*. They are a

resource in every trouble. I always recommend acts. You can't get on with your meditation—make acts; if you are dry and have no fervour, you can make acts. What acts are we to make in preparation for Holy Communion? Acts of desire, of humility, of purity of heart. Our Lord loves to see us full of desires. He loves us to have a very high standard. "But that is too good for me!" Was it an angel or a devil who made you say that? I know it was not an angel. There is no such thing as a grace too high for you to desire. You won't hurt God by desires. It is not too high for you to long for Holy Communion every hour of the day—to have continually the desire to receive our Lord: it is out of the question to have too high desires. Oh that He would come! Why does He not come sooner? Never be afraid of the devotions that have humility in them. You say the third degree of humility is out of your beat. Don't be afraid of it. There is humility in it always. There should be very special acts of humility when we are about to receive the Blessed Sacrament, acts of purity of heart, a desire to render our hearts pleasing to our Lord. There is dust on our hearts, and a brush is wanted to get the dust off. O Lord, put my heart right about this. Have we not some little sacrifice we can offer? Ought we to come without a gift? Lastly, acts of faith, because He is there; of hope as directed to the Blessed Sacrament; and charity—charity to our neighbour, because we all meet, not by natural affection, but in our Redeemer's Heart. Acts of love will last on till we receive our Lord.

Then, a *good thanksgiving*. Oh dear, how short is some people's ! It is one of the things that angels care most for. After that communion, so soon off ! Our Lord is with us a very short while. Our first act on receiving Him should be one of *wonder*. How is it possible He can come to me ? After recovering from my surprise I make an act of *adoration*. I humble myself in the deepest worship of Him who is as adorable now as when I shall kneel before Him in the particular judgment, and as when in heaven I shall gaze upon His wounds. An act of *thanksgiving*. I must thank Him for coming and bringing His gifts ; it is terrible to be backward about thanking. Confidence and gratitude—we must carry these with us out of retreat. An act of *sorrow* that we should be so unworthy, that our preparation and thanksgiving should be so poor. Make acts of sorrow and *reparation*, *i.e.*, oblation of our whole selves. He has given His whole self : shall I give myself in part only ? *Petition*—for others as well as for yourself. Obey the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Do what you feel called to at the time. Prepare your petition. Ask what God would be likely to give. Don't put off considering what you ought to ask till the time for asking comes. Meditation is to be to you the King's ante-chamber, where you are to prepare for your audience with Him and have all ready when you are ushered into His presence, so that you may make most use of that time which of all others is the most valuable, the time when we are brought nearest to the God Who redeemed us. If that were well spent, all the other things would get into their places. One

by one they are difficult ; put Holy Communion right, and they are easy. Why should you take any other when there is the sweet, easy, right way ?

EIGHTH DAY.

[5.30 P.M.]

H E A V E N .

LIFT your eyes to Heaven. Imagine the veil withdrawn which hides the face of God. Look at our Mother and the angels and saints, all desiring the day when we shall enjoy beatitude with them—the day when our Redeemer will be proud of us as the fruit of His Passion. O my God, grant that I may get to heaven !

People have such false ideas of heaven. They would like to stop on here indefinitely. A very good life this, they think ; if they were not to get too old, they would be satisfied with it. They don't work for heaven, because they have such low ideas of it, not much more definite than sitting on wet clouds and singing hymns. We must have right ideas—do our best to have them, that is ; for at best we must promise ourselves a distinct failure.

The day has come at last when Purgatory will be finished. If we once get to Purgatory, we *must* get out. We are like travellers just arriving at the city to which they are bound ; the end is so near when we are once in Purgatory. That faithful angel will be

waiting for me, who has come to tell me of a mass or an indulgence that has been offered for me, and how God had not counted me unworthy of it. The day of release has come. What is the first feeling? Immense surprise at my change. For the first time I am not ashamed; there is not a stain left. How can I recognise myself in charity pure and spotless, fit for the kingdom of heaven? *I* am to be there, with no fault—not an angel, but *I*. *I* who lived that life, did such and such things, made a retreat—here am *I*, no longer having any imperfection. *I* might have been more perfect. *I* am come out of Purgatory purified, but in that degree of sanctifying grace in which *I* died. My angel and *I* have a journey. *I* ask him to let me have one glimpse at that earth *I* left long ago. There *I* used to live; here are places that *I* visited, persons with whom *I* lived, walls that testify to my actions. It was there *I* committed the sin which cost me those years in Purgatory. *I* have plenty of time now: eternity is waiting. We rise—rise to heaven. We meet all those whom we have known and loved, who have had relations with us in any way, our benefactors temporal and spiritual, those who have had the road to heaven made easier through our means. They are changed too. Here on earth we have often been such plagues to each other. We have often thought we should not like heaven with So-and-so. They will be changed then, and be nice enough companions, all their individual good associated with them for ever. Good natural affections have grown into something grander, they themselves the same and yet so changed. To see

the soul of one such is encouragement and rapture enough for us. How glad we shall be to have the opportunity of speaking our gratitude to those who have helped us in any way ! And what will it be to have the thanks of others ! To be thanked for those small things that cost us so little, but which made life happier for others and helped them to bear the Cross better, and enabled them to give God a better service, and brought heaven nearer to them—to be thanked for a benefit that lasts on through eternity. Need there be any limit to the number of these benefits we may scatter about ? We have but to keep a cheerful face, and let people see that those who are good can be happy, that so they may get to heaven more easily. We must help them to discover that one who goes to Holy Communion daily can make home brighter.

We mount upwards through the ranks—the grand array of all the army there. “To rush through the angels into God,” Cardinal Wiseman said ; “kings reigning with Christ”—those are the Church’s words. There are thrones filling, as earth sends into heaven souls fit to dwell on those thrones of glory which were made for angels that have fallen. There is *my place*, matching my life on earth exactly. You prepared your meditation and the acts you would make—that has a counterpart in glory. You checked yourself when you were going to say something sharp—that is exactly reproduced with God’s own liberality. What, so much for so little ! Shall I be afraid I can’t manage the third degree of humility when every little effort at it is rewarded ? All the

failures themselves are rewarded by God. He rewards us for trying.

We turn away from self and look at our companions—angels and saints,—and we are on terms of the greatest equality with them, differing in glory and yet equal, all alike and yet unlike, all seeing God, but some in a greater degree of nearness. I can get very high in heaven, but it depends on my not losing time and not misusing grace. If we choose, we can turn every moment of our lives to advantage, and win by means of it a higher place in heaven.

What will it be to stand on terms of friendship with angels and saints, to be their equals? How good God is to have given me this right! There will be no need of any introduction to that great multitude; we may know all we want to know. Adam and Eve will tell us about Eden. We may go to our patron saints and see all they have done for us, and feel that the gratitude we can give them is inadequate. Those martyrs—Agnes, Lucy, Agatha, Cecilia—we may hear not only how they died but how they lived, how He drew them to Him. We may go to the apostles of our Lord, to those whose names are in Holy Writ, Cleophas and his companion, those two sons of Zebedee, Andrew and Peter, the Baptist, St. Joseph. What will it be to revisit with Joseph Nazareth, Bethlehem, Egypt, Jerusalem and Nazareth again; to listen to the story of each from the lips of Joseph, and feel myself one of the family; to leave even Joseph with joy to find myself at the footstool of Mary, to see her features at last, to be at my Mother's feet, for her to put out her hand and utter her word of welcome! She will do for me

what I have prayed for, she will take her poor child and lead it to Jesus. I have seen Him at the particular judgment, when He would say, "Touch Me not," but now it is not so. What will it be to cast myself at His feet—those wounded feet—and then to look up in perfect confidence, to be with Him without one single misgiving, to look in His blessed face again and see where was once the crown of thorns, now His halo; to see the Heart that had been my refuge open still—the happiness of all to be increased by dwelling there; to hear His words—that which He will say to me; then He will love me more for all that I have cost Him! If I am to prepare myself for that audience, I will tell Him what my sins have been, because the more that I proclaim my misery the more I proclaim His mercy and His love for me. That which hurt Him was diffidence, that which gladdens Him is that I have trusted Him and cast all my care on Him Who cared so much for me. The most helpless has come at last, and for all eternity angels and saints shall praise Him for all that He has done for me.

And when I see our Lord, I shall see His Divinity also, and seeing the Person of the Son I shall see the Father and the Holy Ghost. All else that I have seen, the company, the place, angels and martyrs, Joseph, Mary, even the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, is not enough to fill my heart for eternity; that can only be filled by the sight and knowledge of God, when I see and know His very Self with that degree of sight and knowledge which is proportioned to the degree of grace I have had in life. I could always long for

more until I possess the Infinite. The sight of God will show me all possible good. If I want to know all natural things, then I shall know them. I shall pass from place to place at will through all God's great creation, and see it all in God, nothing having power to draw me away from God. Michael and Raphael and Gabriel, those great archangels ! Seeing their beauty will make me worship God the more. Love of God will take such possession of me, I shall ever be drawn to love Him more and more. Is not this enough to look forward to ? Well, if I always saw heaven, how easy it would make everything here ! And so I encourage myself with the thought of that full and perfect happiness which shall know no ending, God using His omnipotence that so He may bestow on those He loves a home worthy of Himself. God's heaven is our home.

One moment longer let us linger there in the midst of saints and angels. I remember the day when I found myself a novice at Manresa saying I could not believe my eyes that this for which I had longed had come to me at last. A day will come when I shall be somewhere better even than in the noviciate. Think what it will be. Our Lord will come and find me. He is passing by—what will it be to kneel while He pauses and speaks and holds the sweetest colloquies with me ! He reminds me of that turning point, the change that came when I resolved to live for Him, to make Him a return of love, to give up my wretched distrust, that there might be no severance between His Heart and mine. What graces has He given me from that day forward ! What

inspirations has He sent me ! How precious in His eyes were those virtues of faith and hope and charity that He implanted in me ! He seemed to be out of sight, but He was looking on, and now His Heart will rejoice to heap up the reward, that as the ages onward roll, He will bestow on me. Oh the love with which He looks at me, to make me feel I am something in His eyes and have a distinct place in His Heart and affections—I, who fought with those temptations and trials !

Would not life speed by fruitfully, if thus I thought of heaven ? I have been sent away from home, I am a pilgrim wandering away from home, but I keep the thought of my home in my heart. I am going home, and I never will forget my home.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

I.—Thank God—

1. For the benefits you have received during the past day, over which you rapidly cast your eyes ;

2. And for at least one of the general great gifts He has bestowed on you, as your Creation, your Preservation, His fatherly care of you, your Redemption, your Baptism, Confirmation, Absolutions, Communions, special graces, etc.

II.—Ask God's grace—

1. For light to know your sins ;

2. And for grace to make true acts of contrition and efficacious purposes of amendment.

III.—1. Make your particular examination, and note it down with a new resolution respecting it.

2. Make your general examination, demanding of your soul a brief account from your last examination to the present time, of your thoughts, words, actions and omissions.

IV.—Make several fervent acts of contrition, spending more time over this and the following point than over all that has gone before.

V.—Make your purpose of amendment—

1. Looking back, select the point on which a fresh resolution is most required.

2. Looking forward to the immediate future, make resolutions respecting those things that most call for care and forethought, heartily commending yourself to the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

HOLY COMMUNION.

I.—Before Communion.

1. *Desire.* “With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you.” Our desire to be with our Lord must be like His desire to be with us.

2. *Humility.* “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof.”

3. *Purity of Heart.* “Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that Bread.” “If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.”

II.—At Communion.

1. *Faith.* It is the "Mystery of Faith."
2. *Hope.* "The pledge of future glory is given us."
3. *Charity.* "Abide in My love."

III.—After Communion.

1. *Wonder.* "Whence is this to me?"
 2. *Adoration.* "Devoutly I adore Thee, O hidden Deity."
 3. *Thanksgiving.* "What shall I render to the Lord for all that He has given me?"
 4. *Sorrow.* "We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants whom Thou has redeemed with Thy most precious Blood."
 5. *Oblation.* "I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me."
 6. *Petition.* "If you abide in Me, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."
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NOTES OF INSTRUCTIONS

GIVEN BY

FATHER MORRIS, S.J.

INSTRUCTIONS.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.—THE LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM OUR FAILURES.

To have confidence and a good heart is a condition of success. Very often when a doctor gives encouragement, it is better than a prescription. If people don't know what it is to be beaten, they never are beaten. Our spiritual life is a great warfare, and for our success in it it is most necessary to have encouragement. Discouragement is in a great measure the cause of the poor results we see.

Why is discouragement so common? Where does it come from? Most people would say, "From my own failures. I make a resolution, and when I fail in keeping it, I think there is no use in beginning again. I know I shan't succeed." You know you won't succeed in doing—what? A supernatural work, the work that God has given you to do. Let us consider this.

Is there no use in my trying to do what God helps me to do? Could I think He was expecting from me what it is not in my power to perform? It must be that I look at it as *my* work, and that therefore I feel sure I shall fail. It is not *my* work; it is God's work in me. I cannot do it alone. I have been trying to do it in my own strength. Two can raise a weight *one* cannot raise alone. Has He not let me fail because

He wanted to remind me that it was His work, and I must rely on Him? I laid out a plan and forgot Him. There was no use in thinking I could do it alone ; if I forget God, I *must* break down.

How are we to strengthen ourselves against discouragement? We must have it clearly in our minds that we *can't* get on without God. He means good to come out of failures and falls, and we shall be gainers by our falls if they produce the effect He wishes. A double effect. First, an immense distrust of ourselves. Have we not been disappointed enough in trusting ourselves? Till we are convinced that we can do nothing of ourselves, we shan't turn to God and live in unshaken confidence in Him. What does this confidence rest on? It rests on the articles of our creed, the attributes of God. He is omnipotent—able to do whatever He pleases. He has the strength, and He can give it to us. We can't be overdone. We can never say of anything that he requires us to do, "That is too much." His wisdom can devise a way in which I can do it. I can't hesitate in believing Him to be wise, and, being wise, He will so adjust the means to the end that it will be possible for me to do what He would have me to do. God will give me strength to do what He asks of me. He loves me. His love is as strong as His Wisdom. I am foolish enough to hesitate and doubt as to whether He loves me or not. He could not have put me where I am, to do the work I have got to do, unless He had provided me with the means required to do it. What further proofs could He have given of His Love than He has given? Why cannot we believe that He loves us? If I can

say, "I *know* He loves me," my difficulties are at an end. All will be right with me then, and I shall have that courage and confidence which is necessary.

What a return to make for all that He has done for us—to be doubtful as to whether He loves us ! Yet how many are absolutely free from all distrust of God ? We say, " Yes, if I were good ! but can He love *me*, being what I am ? " As if He did not know what we are ! Whenever we turn to Him, He is ready and waiting. We do hinder Him by our want of confidence. We are apt to say, " Let me just try by myself for a time. I will come for grace by and by." If we recognised that we could do *nothing* without God, not use our minds, our hands, our tongues, etc., without Him, trusting Him always, what a vastly different thing our spiritual life would be !

Failure only means God's reminder to you that you've been forgetting Him. Set yourself right with God at once. Go to work at once. Return to Him. Resume your place with Him, asking forgiveness with humility, distrust of self and confidence in Him, and you will bless your failures, and each failure will bring you closer to God. He knows there will be failures. He can't help seeing them, but He is always ready to forgive. You can't imagine *how* ready He is when we sorrow and wish we had done better.

Every time you break down should be a reason for beginning afresh. Preserve union with God, and the work is *certain* to succeed. Rest on God and his love. The more we can renew this union with Him, the more cheerful, the brighter, the more worthy of Him will be our service.

Form then the strongest possible desire to be united to God. It is not the break-down that does the harm, but the discouragement. Give Him the confidence He asks and the ultimate result of the fall won't be bad. All will work for our good in the Heart of the God Who loves us.

January 26, 1886.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SERVING TWO MASTERS.

(Third Sunday in Lent.)

“He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.”

How curiously the Gospel for this Sunday runs ! It begins with the devil and ends with our Blessed Lady. It shows us evil and good openly at warfare ; the power of Satan fighting with grace.

How great the power of the devil was in those days ! He could inflict dumbness and blindness and other bodily infirmities. His influence over the body was only intended as a figure of his influence over the soul. It was not necessarily hurtful in the body as it was over the soul, where it is the one great evil. There was no sin in possession, and therefore no real harm.

Our Lord desires to put right that which had been wrong, so He puts his Blessed Mother before us. The devil could not induce her to commit sin. A woman

in the crowd raised her voice in praise of Mary, and our Lord says, "Yea, *rather* blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Our Lady was declared blessed even by herself. Our Lord assents, but He says there is a blessing belonging to her that can be shared by all. She hears the word of God, she ponders it, she keeps it, she is faithful. She gives Him all He asks. In her there is an absolute correspondence to grace; in her we see that "fruit of the light which is in all goodness and truth." St. Paul in the letter to the Ephesians which we have just heard, when he exhorts them to walk as "children of the light," has been describing sins that drew down the anger of God. But their sins had been washed away, grace had been bestowed. "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord." Henceforth they must walk as children of the light. Those who know the word and keep it have the same blessedness that Mary had. Those who are aiming at perfection are blessed.

"He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." The world is divided into two sides—the slaves of the devil and the servants of God. What are we doing for Him Who redeemed us, Who has brought us into His marvellous light? The whole world was in darkness. How evil our lot was! But now Christ has delivered Himself for us, and we are children of the light! Of *that* we are to be proud, that the Holy Ghost is in our hearts, always dwelling with us when we are in a state of grace. But "he that is not with Me is against Me." People think they can be neutral. This is

impossible. We must not dream that we need take neither side, that we can lead a self-pleasing life, forgetting our Lord, and yet be all right because we are not openly against Him. His service we have to look to. It is right enough to keep ourselves from harm ; but there is something more to be done. We have to look to our Lord and be on His side. Grace comes from Him and from no one else. Unless we pray, temptations cannot be resisted ; the only course that can save us is to be on His side. "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth." If we are not helping to bring other souls to heaven, we are scattering. We have to be on His side always. We must not be content with avoiding evil, but we must do that which is good, and imitate Mary in making use of that good which He has purchased. We must see that we are unmistakably on His side, that we *cannot* serve two masters, that we gather with Him always, lest we injure the souls for whom He died.

This, then, shall be the fruit we will ask from the Holy Sacrifice to-day—that there may be no question to whom we belong, that however attractive anything may be, we will make the sacrifice gladly when we know that it is not God's Will that we should have it. We will pray that we may belong to Him entirely, that, imitating Mary in the hearing and keeping of His word, we may be sharers in the blessing that belongs to her.

March 5, 1893.

THE USE OF TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS.

(Fourth Sunday in Lent.)

“ This He said to try them, for He Himself knew what He would do.”

ALMIGHTY God is no tempter of evils, as St. James says, but He puts men into trying positions. He would try their souls. He is constantly trying us, knowing what He Himself will do. He sends us things we can use badly ; the things He intends for our good we may misuse. Our whole life is a trial. Men forget that, and are apt to think that trials lead them into sin. But because we are in a state of probation, a state of preparation for what is to come, we *must* have temptations. We must not think that temptations are excuses, that we *must* yield to them. God allowed them to come, knowing what He would do—how He intends to send stores of grace.

Now what should we do when a trial comes? The first thing is to fear for ourselves, feeling our own weakness and how little capable we are of resisting. God means the trial to give us a splendid opportunity of distrusting self and exercising humility. If we think we can fight our own battles, we shall be beaten for certain. We must recognise our own incapacity. God means us to be *convinced* that all good comes from Him, and that we can do nothing with our own

strength. So, secondly, we must humbly trust in God, we must draw near to Him in these times of trial and temptation. He looks to us to come to Him, to turn to Him in earnest. This then is what we have to do—to *turn to God*.

To turn to God and *accept His Grace*. For He requires us to co-operate with Him. He has given us free-will, the power of choice. His grace is not there to lie fallow ; we must use it, correspond with it. With God's grace I am capable. With God's grace I can fight His battle. The glory will be God's, the reward will be ours. We have not done it by our own strength, but we have co-operated with grace. God will have the glory of the victory, and we shall have the reward.

These trials are intended in order that we may have sacrifices to make. We should like to be quiet and at peace, but we have to fight instead, and this is very unpleasant. It is not in accordance with our will. We have to subdue ourselves, to do what we dislike. The sacrifice is an offering we can make to God. We may take what goes contrary to our natural inclination and give it to Him. His grace makes it acceptable.

There will be steady improvement under the process. Every time we win makes the struggle more easy another time, and assists the formation of habits. The more frequently we make sacrifices, the easier will sacrifices become. Sanctity is attained by union with God. So He sends us trials. "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to try them ; for He Himself knew what He would do."

The trial is to produce confidence in Him. Confidence in Him can never be too great. Trials strengthen our love and confidence. He never failed us when we trusted in Him.

If all this good is to come from trusting Him, the course before us is plain. He Who is watching us, He Who is loving us, sends the grace that we may overcome in every temptation. Trusting Him means flying to Him ; trusting Him means praying to Him ; trusting Him means looking to Him ; trusting Him means using His grace. *His divine desire is to do for us so much more than we have let Him do.*

March 12, 1893.

THE PASSION.

(Passion Sunday.)

“Jesus said to them : Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made I am.”

VERY striking are these words in which our Lord proclaimed His Divinity. He did not do so often. He came on earth to live a life like ours—to show us how life was to be lived. His divine nature was a matter of faith. Still from time to time it had to be proclaimed. It was no rapine, as the Apostle says, when He proclaimed Himself to be equal with God. He had said, “If any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever,” and the Jews appealed to Abraham their father, Abraham for whom they had the

greatest veneration, and they considered it an unanswerable reply, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham who is dead? Whom dost thou make thyself?" Our Lord could scarcely help proclaiming Who He was. "Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day." His joy was in his knowledge of God. "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" the Jews asked. Our Lord answers with *great* solemnity, "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, *I am*." Abraham was a creature, I am the Creator. My existence is eternal. I am Who am, Who exist from Myself, the Eternal. They understood it, and took up stones to cast at Him. Assuredly if He were not God, it was a blasphemy. When He said, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is My flesh," they asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" He would have set them right, had they been wrong in supposing that His words meant that He intended to give His body for their food. So now He intended to tell them that He was God, and they understood His meaning; but they would not believe.

The Church gives us this Gospel on Passion Sunday, in order that in meditating on our Blessed Lord's Passion we may remember His Divinity. Mary standing by the Cross knew that He was God. John and Mary Magdalene believed, but they did not know that He would rise from the dead; only His Blessed Mother knew that, but as to His Divinity John must have understood as Peter did.

What a difference it makes when the Passion is so contemplated ! No man could have atoned for himself. He was dying—not for Himself but for all men. Mary knew that her redemption cost Him more than that of others. If during His life it had required a great act of faith to believe His Divinity, it required greater faith when He hung on the Cross.

It was the Will of His Father that He should be born and die. There was a limit to His sufferings. It is possible that some of the martyrs may have suffered more bodily pain, but never was there passion like to His, because He was God. He knew that the punishment of sin was laid on Him. The pain and the shame and the disgrace were all the greater because of His being God. Think what He passed through. Think of the blow on His sacred face in the house of Annas, and how He stood there as before His judge ; then how He was brought before Caiphas as a malefactor, how He was condemned as a blasphemer. Think of the shame when these false accusations were brought against Him, of the shame during the remainder of the night when He was buffeted and blindfolded and mocked, His claim to read human hearts rejected — “ Prophecy who it was that smote Thee ; ” the shame when they led Him to Pilate, His own people clamouring for His death—“ His Blood be upon us and upon our children,”—as though it were an act of justice ; the shame when He was sent to Herod, and Herod with his soldiers set Him at naught and put on Him a white garment, deriding Him ; the shame when Barabbas was preferred to Him ; the shame of being

handed over to the Roman soldiers, the stripping and the scourging ; the shame of being clad in the purple cloak and crowned with thorns and made to hold the reed, while they in mockery genuflected to Him ; the shame of hearing, " If you let this man go, you are no friend to Cæsar ;" the shame of being condemned to death and of carrying His Cross through Jerusalem—Jerusalem where He had preached and taught and worked so many miracles and claimed to be the Messiah ; the shame of meeting all those people who had been familiar with His teaching and His works, now that He was declared an impostor and unworthy to live ! Think of the shame of being lifted on the Cross on Calvary between two thieves ; the shame of hearing, " He saved others, Himself He could not save," " He claimed to be God and He is not God ;" the shame, when He had always made His claim so modestly !

Have we now got a deeper insight into His pain, the pain of His Heart ? He knew and understood and felt the shame of the way in which He has been and will be treated by *all* His people. How many are living worthily to prove their gratitude to Him ? How many are eager to save their souls ? How many show that they think humiliation a blessed portion ? When we fail to show it in our lives, we too are adding to the humiliation of His Passion. There is humiliation for Him in the life of every one of us. How can we make reparation for this humiliation we have caused Him ? How can we show our faith ? We are to live in order to fulfil His Will. We are to show that we are caring for Him, that we are loving Him,

that we are trusting Him, that we are passing through this life to a better one. We are to remember that He is God. We are to be resolved that He shall receive no humiliation from us, but that we will give Him all the glory that we can. We must have this faith strongly in our hearts, and show it in every action of our lives.

March 19, 1893.

LESSONS FROM THE PALMS.

(Palm Sunday.)

THERE are two ways of considering the Passion. We may take it in detail, examine it bit by bit ; there is something to learn from every part of it, and we can't enter *too much* into details. Or secondly we may look on it as a whole, and that is the reason why the Church gives it at full length in the mass to-day and on other days of Holy Week. And this is our work this morning—a work that should be exceedingly fruitful. If we learn much from examining parts of the Passion, so does the whole tell its lesson. Let us take it in, and while we read it say, "He did that for me." Remind yourself that it was for you. From the beginning to the end He passed through it all for love of you.

The palms which are distributed remind us of the way in which He introduced His Passion, with the humble little triumph of His entry into Jerusalem.

He had just performed the most striking of His miracles—that of raising Lazarus,—and it had produced a very great impression and was the cause of this outburst of feeling and the enthusiasm that was manifested ; and this His coming into Jerusalem had been foretold. And they cut down branches and strewed their garments in the way and said, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,” doing Him all the honour they could. They conducted Him to Jerusalem, and then they forgot all about it. The outburst of feeling passed away. The Church wishes to remind us of that. Taking the palms brings it more home to us. What we may feel is that we too have made protestations, we too have said, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,” and then allowed Him to have our sins to bear when we ought to have offered Him all the homage of our heart. I have said what this palm says, and forgotten that I said it.

Let us hold our palms with great earnestness of purpose. The palm declares it is only reasonable that we live for His glory, that we lead the life that He wishes us to lead. That palm may not wither. When the enemy comes, may he find us guarded by the Passion. Let us make a new act of love, a new act of submission, a declaration that He is our Lord. Hosanna. Blessed is He that cometh !

March 26, 1893.

EASTER SUNDAY.

How suddenly the Resurrection comes—that Resurrection which is the crowning point of God's revelation, the last and noblest of His works! How suddenly it comes to the little band of His disciples! Not suddenly to our Lord Himself. He had fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Himself. He had entirely accomplished His Father's Will. He had gone to the souls in Limbo to impart to them the Beatific Vision, their substantial glory for all eternity. The Resurrection did not come suddenly to them. They knew that He would take them from prison, that He had come to liberate them. He was to gather round Him in heaven those who had prepared themselves in life to be with Him. That work is going on still. Our bodies will rise by His power, and He wills that we too should be with Him, body and soul, in heaven. Our work is a gradual one. We have to live like those who have a future life before them in the constant thought that we shall be judged.

We shall go to Purgatory. I think there are very few who will not go there, unless indeed they have availed themselves of a plenary indulgence at the hour of their death. But the necessary condition for getting the *full* benefit of a plenary indulgence is that we should be detached entirely from all venial sin, and it is not probable that those who do not strive

hard for it during their life will attain that entire detachment, that perfect contrition, without which God cannot remit the penalty due to them. Purgatory will be much longer than we think. We shall look on our infidelities when we are there with very different eyes from what we do now.

Then there will be the expectation of the general judgment. Our perfect happiness will be a gradual process. But what is any length of preparation compared with eternity—an eternity of happiness, to last as long as God is God?

We have been reading the story of the Resurrection in St. Mark's Gospel, and we see how those three holy women who went to the sepulchre, did not understand that our Lord was to rise on the third day, and the Apostles did not understand either. *After* He was risen, they understood.

How sudden the Resurrection was to all—even to our Blessed Lady! She knew plainly and clearly that her Son was to rise. He had lived with her all those years and had initiated her into His plan for the redemption of mankind. How she grasped all He taught her! But the anticipation of the Resurrection did not take away her grief. When Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again," clearly, though Martha believed he would rise, she did not know it would be at once, and Jesus, seeing her grief and the grief of those with her, wept for them. But Mary knew fully that Jesus would rise on the third day. Why then did she suffer? Because He came to redeem the world by drinking the chalice of bitterest suffering. He would bear the shame and the

pain and the anguish of the Passion, and He shut out all happiness from His soul and the thought of all that might console Him during that agony. And Mary is conformed to His likeness. She concentrates herself on the pain, and suffers when He has ceased to suffer. The effect of the Passion is on her, imprinted on her imagination, and causes her desolation. Even to her the Resurrection is sudden. What a revulsion of feeling when she saw Him again, the glory streaming from His wounds, His sacred body alive once more in magnificence and splendour! He strengthened her eyes to see far greater glory than any one else could see.

If Easter comes suddenly, let us remember that heaven will come suddenly too. It was worth our Mother's while to have lived and suffered for the sake of the Resurrection—how much more in heaven! The day will come when we too shall be called to receive our reward. When that day comes, God grant that we may have been brave, God grant that when temptation has assailed us we may have been found valiant, and that we may so have fulfilled His Will here that He may welcome us and bestow on us a likeness to Himself in His glory.

April 2, 1893.

OUR LORD INSTITUTING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

(Low Sunday.)

IN the Gospel for this Sunday we have a record of two different appearances of our Blessed Lord. That which took place on the evening of Easter Sunday was of immense importance. It was the first time that He had appeared to a number of His disciples at once. The Blessed Virgin and Magdalene and Peter had seen Him. When the two disciples started to Emmaus that evening, they had heard that the holy women "had seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive." Then He appeared to these two, and lastly to all His Apostles except Thomas. "He came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you," that peace which He had come to restore. He who does all things well chose Easter Sunday for instituting the sacrament of Penance. We must not therefore think it out of the way if at Easter we take the sacrament of Penance as the subject for our consideration. "He said therefore to them again, Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them, and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." Our

Lord thus instituted a tribunal for trial and forgiveness; He constituted a priest a judge; the penitent is both witness and criminal. We bear witness against ourselves; the priest may judge of our dispositions. The object was that the judgment of Almighty God might be anticipated. There will be a judgment when our souls part from their bodies. He meant that we should get our forgiveness beforehand. The priest is God's representative. Who can forgive sins? None but God, but He can forgive in what way He chooses. He signalized the day of His Resurrection in conferring on His Apostles the power to pardon sins, making forgiveness accessible, attaching to the sacrament of Penance graces which none but He could bestow, applying the fruits of His Passion to the contrite soul. It is so important, because it is the only sacrament left for the forgiveness of sins after Baptism. It is perfectly true we *can* be forgiven without it. Contrition procures us forgiveness, but God knows our weakness. What would happen if we had to depend on acts of contrition? We are extremely easy with ourselves. What amount of trouble do we take even with confession? Don't we throw more on absolution than we should, and take little pains to be sorry? Our Lord saw what danger there is lest we should be too easy, lest we should think any act would do. I am afraid we don't take pains, as it is. He has *not* left power to forgive the sins of those who are not sorry. This sacrament has done much to create sorrow for sin. If left to ourselves, how little remorse we have! When people neglect confession, *some* sins will startle them, but for the general run

they won't be sorry. They get into a habit of carelessness about sin, and it requires a great effort to break habits.

Then who are we that we can be sure we have made an act of contrition? We ought to know by considering *why* we are sorry. Attrition is not a *weak* act of contrition, but sorrow for the harm that is to come to myself from sin, and having deserved to lose heaven, fear of hell and purgatory. It is more easy to make an act of sorrow for sin, because it has caused harm to ourselves, but it is only *with* confession such an act—an act of attrition—remits sin. If you are to be pardoned without confession, you must make an act of perfect contrition. A sorrow which would not have availed without confession, avails now for the remission of sins. No one outside the Church gets that help.

The priest in the tribunal of penance is a physician also. The soul needs a physician. Without this sacrament we should not have a remedy and a physician. The priest instructs the conscience, he gives advice and guidance. He is put there to help and sympathise and make sinners welcome. *Millions* will thus have been saved who would have lost their souls otherwise. How thankful we should be! What reason we have to bless God! How we should show our gratitude by doing what we can to derive from this great sacrament *all* that He intends it should give us—a very great increase of grace! Those who receive it in the state of grace get great graces. There have been saints who went to confession very often. Through this sacrament the soul

gets more and more grace and help to resist temptations. In order to get the benefit of it, God has made it sufficient that we accuse ourselves time after time of the same sin : the grace He bestows is dependent on our disposition.

It is a gift *worthy of Easter Day*. He chose that day in order to make it. The outcome of that love which caused Him to retain the marks of His Passion in His hands and feet was the institution of the sacrament of penance. Our great feeling must be, How good it was of Him ! I will take care to make the best use of this holy sacrament, and to carry away from it *all* that He intended for me when He instituted it on Easter Day.

April 9, 1893.

OUR PRIVILEGES AS CATHOLICS.

(Second Sunday after Easter.)

“ I am the Good Shepherd.”

OF all the familiar titles of our Blessed Lord, perhaps this of the Good Shepherd is dearest to us. It has been so from the earliest times. In the catacombs we meet with picture after picture representing our Lord as the Good Shepherd, standing with all His love and gentleness with the lost sheep on His shoulders. It was a representation which the pagans,

if they met with it, would not understand—a symbol telling us of all that in His office as Shepherd He does for us, the care He takes of us and the fidelity and love we owe Him in return.

He provides for us *abundantly*, He has gathered us into His fold on purpose. “I know Mine.” He has exercised His infinite wisdom in order to make provision for us. No one who was not omnipotent could do so much for us. He has provided for us that we should be possessed of truth. He has bestowed the gift of infallibility on His Church, in order that we may be positively certain she is right, that there may be no possibility of error, that in believing her we may know that we are believing God. He takes care of her for our sakes. I don’t suppose that any of us feel it a hardship to believe the Church. It is the greatest condescension on the part of God to give us this certainty. What happens when people discuss any question? They all take different views. They can’t all be right; not one of them may be right. We should have been wrong for certain, if God had not provided for us. Some people wish to think and believe just as they like, to go their own way and feel themselves perfectly free, and this has induced them to leave the Church. Within the Church we have knowledge. The more we know, the happier we are.

But the Church also teaches us the kind of life we should lead, and here there seems a hardship. We feel disposed to say, “I wish I were not obliged to do this and avoid that.” It is very true that we have a rebellious nature, but we should do ourselves a

great injury if we followed it. We are the worst possible guides for ourselves. Though the mortification of our perverse nature may hurt us, we can in sober sense only feel gratitude that God has demanded it of us. For this life is *only a passage* to another life, and the Church, in explaining to us the commandments of God, is acting the part of a tender mother. If left to ourselves we should lose our souls. So long as we are feeling the commandments easy, we are in no particular danger; but when they begin to appear difficult, nature is coming in, and the enemy makes use of our nature to tempt us. It is just at that time we ought to be most thankful to have a guide. If we only listen to the Church and practise those virtues she teaches, we are on the right road. Through the Church our Lord has bequeathed help to us, and provided for us at all stages of our life. Every sacrament is a channel by which the Precious Blood is poured into our souls, precisely that grace may come to us abundantly. And prayer—we have been taught how necessary that is. We are to approach Him, show Him our wants, ask Him for help in all loving confidence. This is part of that provision He has made for us, that not only at mass, not simply when we rise in the morning and when we go to rest at night, but that all through the day, all our life long, we should have the power of lifting up our minds to God and drawing down help from Him—the help that will so abundantly be given if we will but avail ourselves of all that the Good Shepherd has so liberally provided.

Then He has protected us from the dangers that

beset those who are outside the Church. If He has brought us into His Church that we may be saved from the devil and his snares, we must have the spirit of those within the fold. The spirit of those outside is not His spirit ; with them the devil has his own way largely. It will not do for us to admit those doubts in which they indulge, or to lead the lives they consider themselves justified in leading. God does not protect us against our own wilfulness. We *can* remain within the fold and be wilful and guilty of want of loyalty to Him. That He has redeemed us and gathered us into His fold makes it a *shame*, if we admit anything that can be hurtful to us. Our doing wrong brings dishonour on Him. Let us accept the teaching of His Church with docility, so that we may bring honour and glory to Him. Let us then have a spirit of loyalty. We belong to Him, and therefore a sense of gratitude and love must animate us and make us *always* be on His side. On one side or other we must be. Not only are we His, but He is ours. We intend to devote ourselves to Him and His service now, and He Himself will be our great reward hereafter.

April 16, 1893.

PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

(Third Sunday after Easter.)

“ A little while and now you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me ; because I go to the Father.”

THE disciples could not understand our Lord's meaning. “ What is this that He saith to us ? ” they ask. Our Lord repeated His words, and explained to them how they must have sorrow when He should be taken from them ; but they should see Him again and their hearts would rejoice, and their joy no man should take from them. And what He said to them He says to us : “ A *little while* and you shall see Me.” Yet this little while is our mortal life. It seems long—there is a possibility it may last many years ; yet in reality it is very short. In a little time we shall see Him face to face. We shall see Him Who has died for us, we shall see Him who has fed us, cared for us, assisted us in our every necessity, in order that when we die we may be happy in the sight of Him. Life is *full* of His graces ; there is no need of ours but He sees it, and sends us help *abundantly*—far more help than we can require. Thus we may learn what love He has. We must take care that we may be ready when He calls us, and He be able to receive us with a smile of joy and affection. He would have His Mother to be our

Mother, and St. Joseph to protect us as he protected Him, and all His friends to be our friends. Heaven is getting fuller every year, and all who are there are our friends and full of tender compassion for us, and longing that we may come to be with them. *That* we are to look forward to—our entrance into heaven. When we get there, those inhabitants of heaven are not to be strangers. We are to learn to know them here, and prepare ourselves to be their companions. For this it is that Mary is our Mother, for this it is that St. Joseph is our patron, for this it is that all the saints are interested in us and obtain for us countless blessings. Therefore do we make known to them our needs, whatever they may be ; we ask them to get us such temporal gifts as God sees fit we should have, but for spiritual graces we want no condition. Our prayers are supported by that magnificent voice of intercession which rises up from the hearts of all the saints of God.

Our Lord made no provision for Himself when He was born. He would be ministered to by St. Joseph. He had a special affection for Joseph, the spouse of Mary, His own foster-father, to whom such great graces were given as befitted these high offices. Our Lord took joy in the graces He saw in Joseph. In order that we may be drawn to greater fidelity, He has given St. Joseph to us as our patron. On this day, the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, let us give thanks. St. Joseph watches us in a particular way ; he cares for our temporal needs, but especially for our spiritual needs. We *want* St. Joseph to pray for us, we want St. Joseph to offer those powerful

supplications of his, to raise for us that voice which never spoke to Jesus in vain—that voice to which Jesus listens with such pleasure. How wise we shall be if we secure his prayer! To be neglectful of devotion to St. Joseph would be an indication that we were neglectful of many other devotions. If St. Joseph sees that we are negligent, he will still pray for us. There is the advantage we have in the communion of the saints. If we are loving children of Joseph and trust him, if our hearts are full of love, he will look upon us with greater love.

There are two things in particular that we may ask of St. Joseph, first that he will help us in our spiritual life, and secondly that he will obtain for us a happy death.

We will ask of him then that our hearts may be united to God. It is union with God that we must seek. In duties that seem insignificant the real value depends on this—how far we have been united with God, how much we have subdued ourselves. It is not so much what we have been doing that signifies as what was the intention of our hearts while we were doing it. Was it done to please God? Though we may be incapable of continuous union with God, yet the more frequently and the more fervently we raise our hearts to Him the better. In all this St. Joseph is our help. His life exteriorly seemed unimportant; he passed his days in performing what looked very ordinary occupations, but what was his life interiorly? Let us ask that we may have his spirit.

Of all happy deaths we can't picture one more

happy than St. Joseph's. Let us ask him to procure a like death for us. Everything depends on that. Let us ask that Jesus, Mary and Joseph may be with us then, that we may enter into the presence of our Lord with joy, and that He will pour out on us an abundant reward for the fidelity with which we have lived our life in imitation of the fidelity of St. Joseph. Our life must be like his if our death is to be like his. Let us pray that St. Joseph's prayer may be made and answered, that our life may be more faithful, ever persevering in grace, our hearts loving our Lord more dearly day by day, knowing that we are soon to be with Him, to remain for ever and ever in His presence.

April 23, 1893.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST.

(Fourth Sunday after Easter.)

THE Gospel for this Sunday seems so appropriate to Easter-tide, one would imagine our Lord had spoken those words now instead of before His Passion. How His Apostles must have felt His going away again! The disciples going to Emmaus had expressed their disappointment—"We *had* hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel." And now He had come back to them, changed yet the same. He was obliged to hide His glory. In heaven a special strength is conferred on

those who see God ; they could not gaze on Him now. He is about to leave them again. Sorrow filled their hearts when He spoke of going. Now, when He ascends into heaven, they have a work to do on earth. It was expedient that He should go, yet they are sorrowful ; they had seen Him so little since His death.

He promised them the gift of the Holy Ghost. They stood sorely in need of this gift. They had known their own weakness ; supernatural powers would now be bestowed on them. Our Lord told them it was expedient for them that He should go. " If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you ; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice and of judgment." Jesus Christ had come to found His Church ; the Holy Ghost would complete His work through the Apostles. He describes His work. If He had come to convince the world, so were His Apostles also to convince the world " of sin and of justice and of judgment." Thus He summed up all He had come to effect. Let us look at these three things.

1. *Sin.* He had come to teach men that there *is* sin. Men don't ask themselves whether there is such a thing as sin. They won't look into it. They spend their lives so as not to think of it. They have not believed in Jesus Christ. The Apostles must teach that God has a right to command, and that when He commands we are *bound* to put aside our own will.

2. *Justice* means holiness of life. Our Lord had taught justice by living amongst men, so that they

might lead the same life as He did. He came to teach what virtue is, and what men are capable of attaining to. "He shall convince the world of justice." The Holy Ghost does this by the lives of apostles and saints and those who follow them. Each one receives the Holy Ghost that he may show what justice is. So our Lord says, "He shall convince the world of justice, because *I* go to the Father." His example was to be followed by those who believed in Him, and to remain on earth for ever, because His followers conform themselves to His life and point out to the world the life He wishes should be led.

3. *Judgment.* "The prince of this world is already judged." When we do anything that places us on the devil's side, what we are doing is already judged. When judgment comes, it is no novelty, but only the final declaration and enactment of that judgment the Judge has been passing all along. There is no neutral place. If we are not on our Lord's side, we are on the devil's. If we are on the wrong side now, we must make haste and repent. Let us resolve to keep always on the side of Christ our Lord. Let us prepare ourselves thoroughly for Pentecost.

I will avail myself of all the helps that God has given me. I will go forth as a missionary. The world is to be convinced by me, in consequence of the profound conviction of sin that has taken hold of me, through the work of the Holy Ghost that He has conferred on me.

April 30, 1893.

PRAYER, ITS VALUE AND NECESSITY.

(*Fifth Sunday after Easter.*)

THE Rogation days are days for special prayer. When the Church has her own way, the Litanies of the Saints are recited on these days. We have our Lord's words, "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." As man our Lord could ask the Father for us, and of all acceptable prayers those of our Divine Redeemer are the *most* acceptable. Very efficacious were Mary's prayers, the prayers of one whose will was perfectly conformed to God's Will. When she lifted up her heart in prayer, she asked, because she knew it was the Will of God that she should ask for all, but incomparably greater was the prayer of our Lord. His union with the Father was *perfect*. There was no need He should pray for Himself, but it was *most needful* that He should pray for us. Yet He says, "I need not ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." This does not mean that He will not pray for us, but it is the way in which He expresses the Father's *willingness* to hear our prayers. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name"—it was as if the Apostles had never prayed. "Ask and you shall receive, that

your joy may be full." In future they might lift up their hearts to the Father, and obtain everything that they wanted.

And these promises are made to all. Our Lord was looking out through all time, distinguishing each individually. For *His* sake the Father looks down on us in love. "Whatever you shall ask the Father in *My* name, He will give you." For His sake we are loved. When we were enemies He had compassion on us, but we are enemies no longer. Our reconciliation has been accomplished. For this He gave His Son, and He cares for our prayers because of the love that comes down on us through that Holy Name of Jesus.

What can we do without prayer? We all look out for some one to care for us, some one who will show us sympathy. When we have a trouble or a joy, we think, "To whom shall I go and talk it over?" We want some one to tell it to. If it is a joy, telling it doubles our pleasure. Yet what can any creature do for us in comparison with our Creator? We take great pains to get a little scrap of human sympathy; yet there is our Lord always sympathising with us, His Heart feeling for us in each joy and sorrow. For His sake we have all these promises. There never was a time when man could not pray and lift up his heart to God and ask for strength and repentance. If Almighty God heard prayer then, before the coming of Jesus Christ, how much more now when we have His Son to appeal to! For *His* sake He hears us.

But we must learn to love Him. In this world we

may meet with deep and true affection, but what is the deepest and truest affection our friends here can give us compared to our Lord's? If we put trust in them because of the way in which they care for us, how much more should we trust our Lord! Our Lord's Heart is so overflowing with love. We are to be drawn to Him because He loves us. We cannot make a study of His Heart without being led to love Him, and when we love Him prayer will be easy.

To pray simply as a duty—oh, how difficult! Where there is no confidence, prayer is not worth much. How different is the prayer that springs from our hearts *because we have learnt to trust in God!* Love involves trust, and that trust we have in God makes us pray.

If this feeling possessed us, "I must take my sorrow or my difficulty at once to God, He sympathises with me," what a change would it make in our lives! Things would go right if we took them to Him. But we turn to creatures instead, and there seek our consolation and forget what far greater consolation and help our good Father in heaven would give us.

We have to teach ourselves what God is. He comes and dwells with us and concerns Himself with all that concerns His creatures. God is to come *first* in our minds. *Whatever* happens, we are to take it to Him, and when we have His blessing on it we may do what we will.

He loves us, He is prepared to help us, but we must come to Him for help. How foolish to shut up our hearts from Him! By prayer we ask Him to

come and interfere with all the events of our lives. So then the love of Him shall fill our hearts. We will pray not only at fixed hours but *always*. Ah me ! what *can* be the use of this earthly life, if God is not to have it ? We will give Him our prayers, we will give Him the constant uplifting of our hearts ; we will ask Him to be our guide, to give us strength and perseverance, that we may please Him more and more and love Him more and more. For our blessed Saviour's sake He will come and unite Himself with us every time we lift our hearts to Him.

May 7, 1893.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.)

“ When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me.”

OUR LORD was speaking of what would happen after His Ascension. How was the world to be taught after He had left it ? The Holy Ghost was to do the work. That work which the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had begun was not to be broken off. The Holy Ghost was to abide for ever with His Church. So long as the world should last, the Holy Ghost should teach all truth. “ He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of Mine and shall show it to you.” The Holy Ghost would perpetuate all our

Lord's teaching and example ; that teaching was never to pass away, that example was never to die, but always to remain as new and fresh as though we were seeing and listening to our Lord, through the Holy Ghost "giving testimony." The Apostles at that time were not in a condition to remember or understand all our Lord's teaching, which was to be kept alive partly by Scripture, partly by tradition. All the knowledge and faith we have comes from the Holy Ghost, telling us what is His doctrine and what the life we have to lead, speaking to us not individually but collectively, the Church being infallible, because through her the Holy Ghost bears testimony. Also individually in virtue of the Holy Ghost we can make an act of faith, and we can understand and grasp and make our own what He teaches. It is one thing to know that a thing happened, and another to know that it *concerns us deeply*. Faith, hope and charity are the fruit of the Holy Ghost in us. We must not only have knowledge, but we must practise what we know. We have got to listen and believe and act and do what we see we ought to do. "And you shall bear testimony of Me, because you are with Me from the beginning." The Apostles could say, "I saw and I can tell." That was peculiar to the Apostles; Matthias was chosen to be numbered amongst the twelve, and to Paul the graces of the apostolate were communicated by personal inspiration. But our Lord intended all who should believe in Him to be witnesses of Him, to speak by practice of His life. Man cannot do this by himself, but by the Holy Ghost he can. Man and the Holy Ghost together bear testimony of Jesus.

It is not only therefore that the Holy Ghost dwells in the Catholic Church, but He is also dwelling in each member of the Church and bearing witness. Every Christian should be a witness, the Holy Ghost is with him for that purpose, but he may refuse to be a witness. We in our lives can do the work of the Holy Ghost in the world, and bear testimony to the faith that is in us. We are Catholics—a gift like that must *never* be denied. Those who deny our Lord before men He will deny before the angels of God. On all rightful occasions we must profess our faith : better still, to live so that others may see it. None will be judged by a law he did not know. But we have knowledge that our fellow-countrymen for the most part have not. We have to show them, not those scanty truths of nature, but those larger laws and truths of the kingdom of grace which are ours, representing in our lives the life of our Blessed Saviour. We can't do this in our own strength. We have to look to it that we don't get confounded with the world. *We* shall be judged by *our* standard. But if we act up to our standard, we are not to be surprised if people do not like it. That is just what we ought to expect. The life of our Lord will not be loved by the world, we may be sure ; but we have come into the world to please God and not to please the world. We have to show patience, to show to the world how all trials and difficulties can be borne by those who have received the blessed gift of the Holy Ghost. *Am* I bearing testimony ? Is my life such that it recalls His life ? Do I obey His inspirations ? Do I make use of the strength He gives me ?

These are grave questions. If the answer is unsatisfactory, let it move us to have recourse to Him in earnest, that He may come and take up His abode in our hearts, and so influence us that every thought and word and deed may be sanctified by the Holy Ghost and bear that testimony of which our Lord has spoken so lovingly and encouragingly to-day.

May 14, 1893.

ON SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

(Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)

“Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

WHEN our Blessed Lord begins to talk about eating and drinking and clothing, He is speaking of very homely things. It is impossible not to pay attention to such matters as food and dress. What conclusion then are we to draw? His words are very striking. He says we are not to be solicitous. He is pointing out how the birds of the air are fed, and how the lilies of the field grow, and He tells us we are worth more than these, much more. If we are of much more value than the birds and the lilies, how much more are we to expect that He will clothe us? Of course we are to be on our guard; we might say, “I need not exert myself.” Some, like the “Peculiar

People," are foolish enough to interpret the words literally, and such an interpretation would come to this—that there is no need to work for our daily bread. We know that God put Adam and Eve to work ; they would not have been happy had they had nothing to do. And though there was an abundant return, yet were they to labour. When driven from Paradise, much more were they to labour. It is not in that sense we are to take our Lord's words. In order to ascertain His meaning, we are to see where those two words occur in the sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are the poor," He had said. "Lay not up for yourselves treasure here." He is telling us what is to be our mind in regard to earthly things. "No man can serve two masters." He has been warning us that our eye must be single, so that our body may be lightsome. "But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee be darkness, how great then shall be the darkness!" You cannot serve the master of darkness at the same time as the master of light. If we give our love to God, we shall hate His enemy and contemn and despise him. We can't serve God *and* mammon. If we will serve the world, breathe its air, think as it thinks, judge as it judges, we shall learn to love the world and its ways to the exclusion of God, shutting Him out from our hearts ; if we sustain the one, we despise the other. Our Lord does not mean that we are not to work in the world, but He does mean that our spirit is to be different from that of the world. We may do our work in God's way or mammon's ; we can't do it in both ways. His warning is that we

cannot serve both. He knew what the world was, and He declared that we can't possibly be friends of God and at the same time friends of the world. It becomes of immense moment to look how far we have this fallacy, that we may save our souls in the end, after having devoted our life to the world.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Seek first the kingdom of God." *How* are we to seek first the kingdom of God? By becoming poor in spirit. What is this being poor in spirit? It is the spirit which sees that the world and all that it contains is of very little consequence, and the one thing is God. You have *God* to seek, and if you put Him in His proper place all things fall into *their* proper places: you don't as much as see them. Your heart is a very small affair. Bethlehem was quite full and had no room for the Son of God; and your heart is like that, there is very little room in it. If other things, things of the world, are to have your energies, what have you left for God? If all your ability is employed in these things, you have no room for God. *Let God have the whole place.* If worldly things can usurp all our affections, what will it be when the great God of heaven takes possession of them? To do that which He desires will be all we shall care for; we shall have room for no other thought.

But how are we to manage? Are we to starve? No, God does not want that, but He wishes us not to be over-anxious about our earthly wants; He does not wish us to let earthly things fill our hearts; He does feel jealous when His gifts lead us away from Him.

It is plain enough what we have got to do—to work diligently and leave the rest for Him. We are not to think it a matter of enormous importance that we should have a little more money. If we could have but a bare sufficiency, there would be so much the less to account for at the day of judgment ; and however little we may have, if we are in a proper spirit, we shall think how good God is. If the pinch comes, we are to bear it patiently and lovingly, and have within us the spirit of poverty, which our Lord said was so grand it should have the kingdom of heaven as its reward. Which would you choose to be, the rich man or Lazarus? Surely it is incomparably better to bear the pinch of poverty than to be solicitous about earthly goods and give all our thoughts to this miserable world. God has given us inadequate means, in order that we may have the *common sense* to look on our life as belonging to Him, and not be solicitous about eating and drinking, but immensely, perseveringly solicitous as to how God is to be served, leaving to Him to add all other things. Extreme Unction is given us to restore us to health if God sees it would be best, to give a special blessing through worldly means. Why cannot our whole life be like that? Why should we not work, knowing that He is looking down on us, that His benediction shall fall on our actions? Why should we not *hate* (to use His strong words) all that is not Him?

He who clothes the lilies knows what is best. He treats us like children. We get the choicest of His gifts—not what the world calls the choicest—*His peace in our hearts*. If we are living thus for Him,

how lightsome shall we be ! Let us esteem the mammon at its true value, let us seek the kingdom of heaven—that and that alone,—and leave it to God to give us worldly goods, in fear and trembling lest they should so take possession of our heart that the *whole* of it might not be for Him, clinging to Him and rejoicing that we are His children—the children of a Father who loves us better than He loves the birds of the air or the lilies of the field !

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THE END.

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